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Gabrielle

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'I didn't know how to do or be anything else - I could only be myself!'

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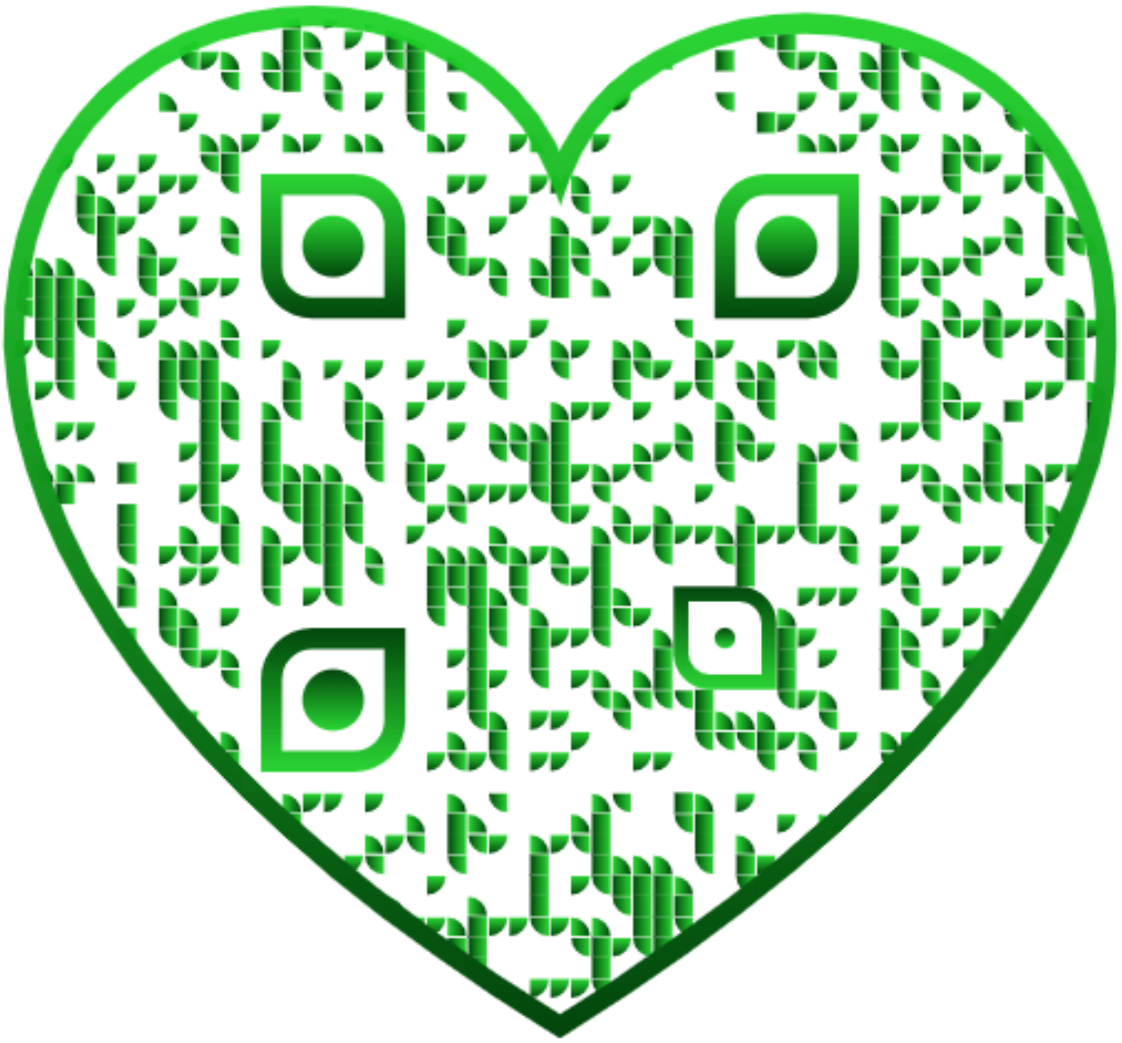

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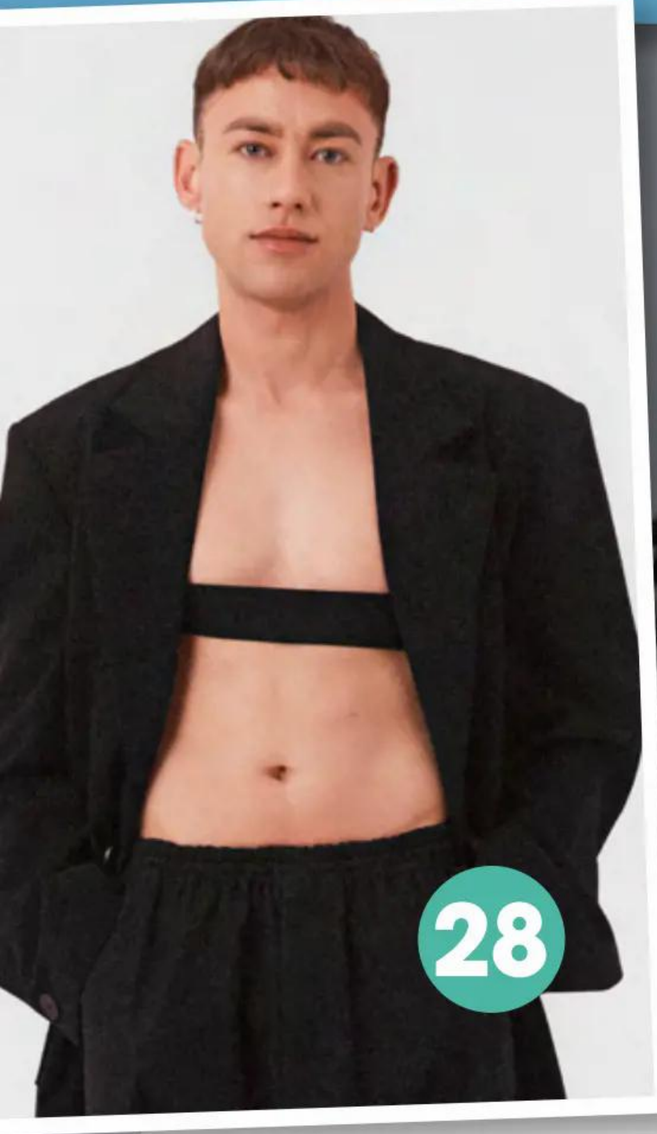

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FLASHBACK

PAUL YOUNG ON 'NO PARLEZ'

Celebrating four decades of the classic 'No Parlez', **Paul Young** revisits his seminal debut album!

"I forget how big the African influence was," admits Paul Young during a playback of the new Dolby Atmos mix of his debut album, 'No Parlez' (1983).

Released that summer, the classic album delivered a run of three UK Top 10 hits - including the chart-topping *Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)* - reached No. 1 on the Albums Chart and remained in the UK Top 100 for 119 weeks, shifting over one million copies in the country alone.

A collaboration with producer Laurie Latham, the sonic landscape of the recordings leans into the records the pair were listening to at the time, including Nigerian jùjú singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist King Sunny Adé - one of the first African pop musicians to gain international success.

"I actually listened to that King Sunny Adé album again the other day and I can actually pinpoint the track that we were inspired by [on *Love Of The Common People*]," Young laughs. "Same goes for *Iron Out The Rough Spots* - massively inspired by Tom Tom Club - which was one of the earliest tracks we did and the focal point of what the album was to become, which was basically a whole lot of messing around in the studio."

It was pure experimentation that ultimately resulted in the direction of 'No Parlez', although Young was determined that the LP would retain a modern edge. Enter Latham, who had worked extensively with Ian Dury and went on to work with Cher, Sinead O'Connor, Robbie Williams and Jamiraquai, among others.

"I'd come out of soul band, Ian [Kewley] was wholeheartedly ready to take on the synthesiser, which we ignored up until that point," Young recalls. "We needed Laurie's input because we'd got our soul background and he was coming in with the tech side."

The amalgamation of influences lent itself to the studio becoming a musical sandbox and one of his biggest hits came about purely by chance - much to the dismay of the label! "We would change what we were doing on a whim, which wasn't what the record company asked us to do," Young admits.

"We dropped one song that we were working on, I think we substituted with *Love Of The Common People*, and when they found out they called up and said: 'Leave the studio, we didn't agree [to] this.' We had to talk them into the idea..."

It may be the song for which he's best-known, but *Love Of The Common People* originally stalled at No. 102 in the charts (a relative success, since *Iron Out The Rough Spots* didn't place at all in '82), but it was *Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)* that gave Young his breakthrough - something he didn't expect. "[I was] very surprised, because I thought *Iron Out The Rough Spots* was *the* great pop song," he admits.

Alongside the songs he co-wrote on the LP, 'No Parlez' also includes a handful of contributions by Jack Lee, who penned hits including *Hanging On The Telephone*, made popular by Blondie. Of how songs like *Come Back And Stay*, *Oh Women* and *Sex* came to be, he explains: "I saw myself as a singer and an interpreter - very old fashioned for the time, [because] you had to be a writer as well - but I thought: 'No, I like to find material.' I was voicing my frustration at some of the things that I was being played to Ian and he said, 'I just did some demos for Jack Lee, I've got a cassette at home'. I played it and I just went: 'That is what I'm looking for!'"

It's a testament to Young that he's never shied away from collaboration; in fact, the first release of *Love Of The Common People* was credited to Paul Young & The Family. "The thing is, my name is on the front but the contribution other people make is massive and I get people in because I think they can bring something to the party," he reflects. "I know that I've got my name on the front and I can at least stand up and go, 'Actually no, I think I prefer what I would have done'. But I'm always willing to go, 'What's your view on this?', and Pino [Palladino, bass] changed things massively. *Wherever I Lay My Hat* was a different rhythm entirely! So the contribution everybody put on the record was enormous - it was great!" **RP**

● ***'No Parlez (40th Anniversary) is out now on Demon.***

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

RETROPOP

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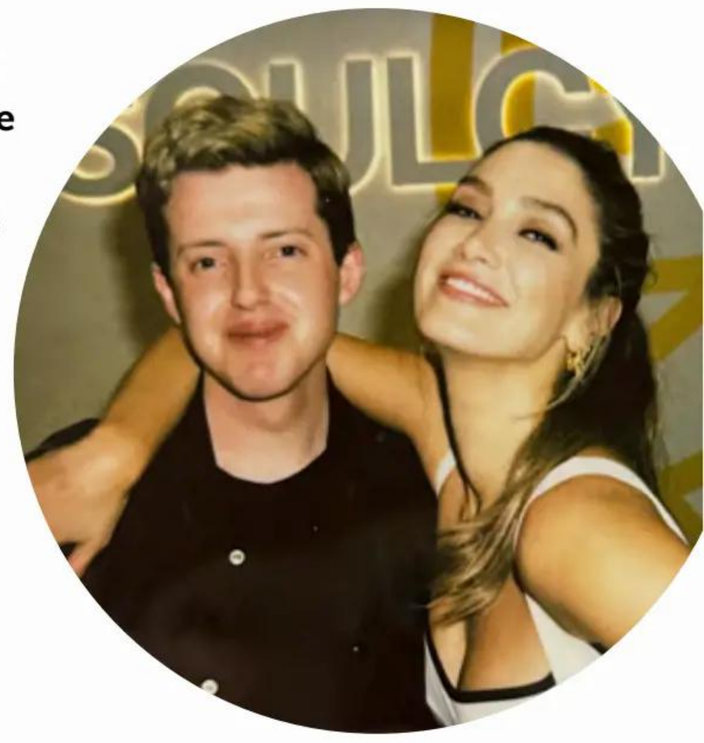

On the back of a huge UK tour celebrating 30 years since the release of her iconic debut single *Dreams*, Gabrielle is back with a brand new album that sees her at her very best.

In 2021, after she appeared on 'The Masked Singer UK', the superstar was one of the first people I interviewed for **RETROPOP**, and she was such a blast that I knew I wanted her on the cover of the magazine for whatever came next.

So here we are - I'm overjoyed to be celebrating her stunning new LP, 'A Place In Your Heart', this month, in an issue that's bursting with pop goodness!

This time around we catch up with pop-rock legends, Crowded House's Neil Finn and Nick Seymour, as the band returns with their eighth studio album 'Gravity Stairs', synth-pop royalty, Blancmange's Neil Arthur, celebrates four decades of hits ahead of their new best-of 'Everything Is Connected', and The Feeling's Dan Gillespie Sells marks 20 years of music with the band's new album 'San Vito'.

Alongside a deep-dive into Janet Jackson's 2004 classic 'Damita Jo' and a look back at this year's brilliant BRIT Awards, we also hear from the likes of Paul Young, producer David Kosten and Bright Light Bright Light, and bring you our epic guide to this year's Eurovision Song Contest!

Don't forget there's plenty more happening outside of the magazine online @RETROPOPmag, where you'll find all the latest news, releases and reviews, plus a glimpse behind the scenes at everything we get up to in the pop world (like Soul Cycle with Delta Goodrem - because why not?!).

Enjoy the issue and we'll be back again with even more next month!

Connor

Connor Gotto, Editor
@MrConnorGotto

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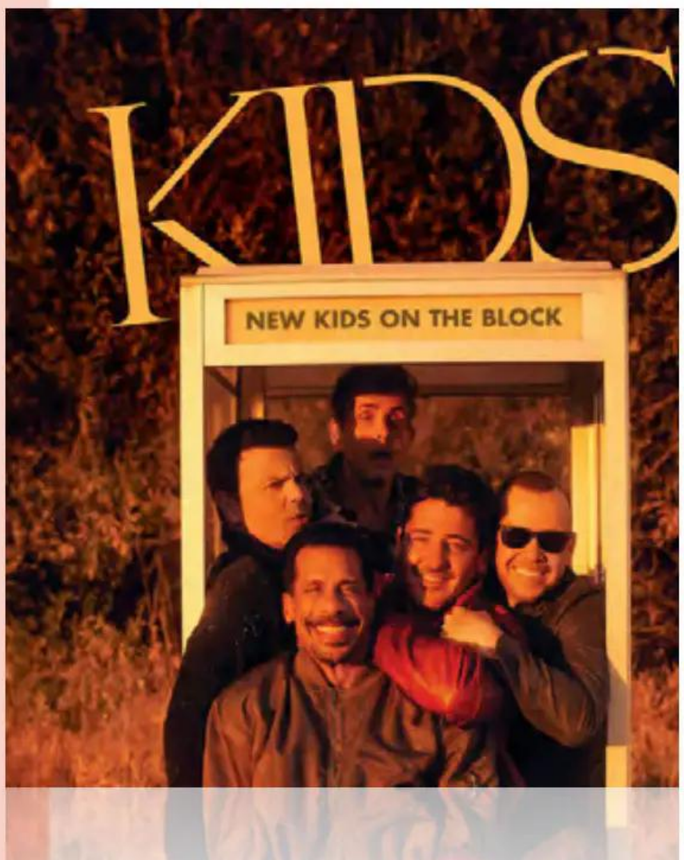

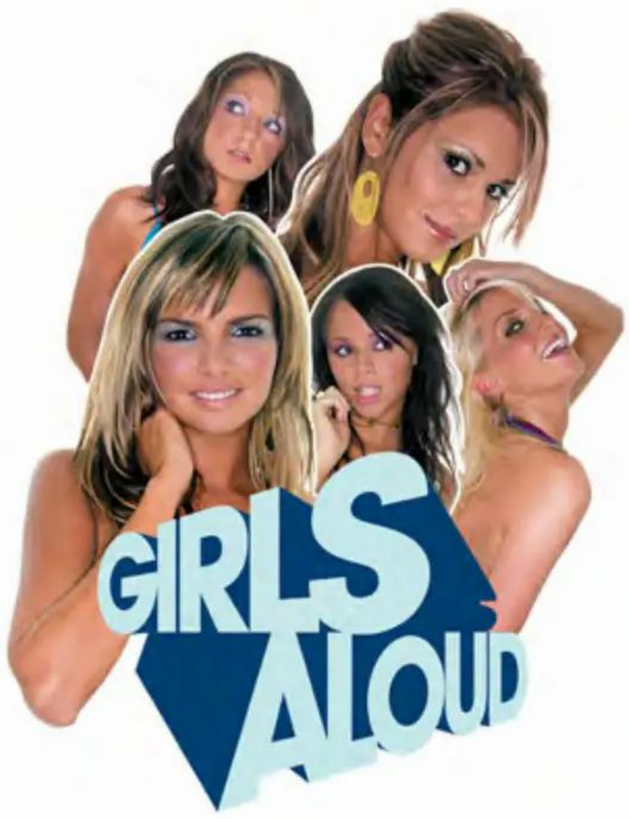

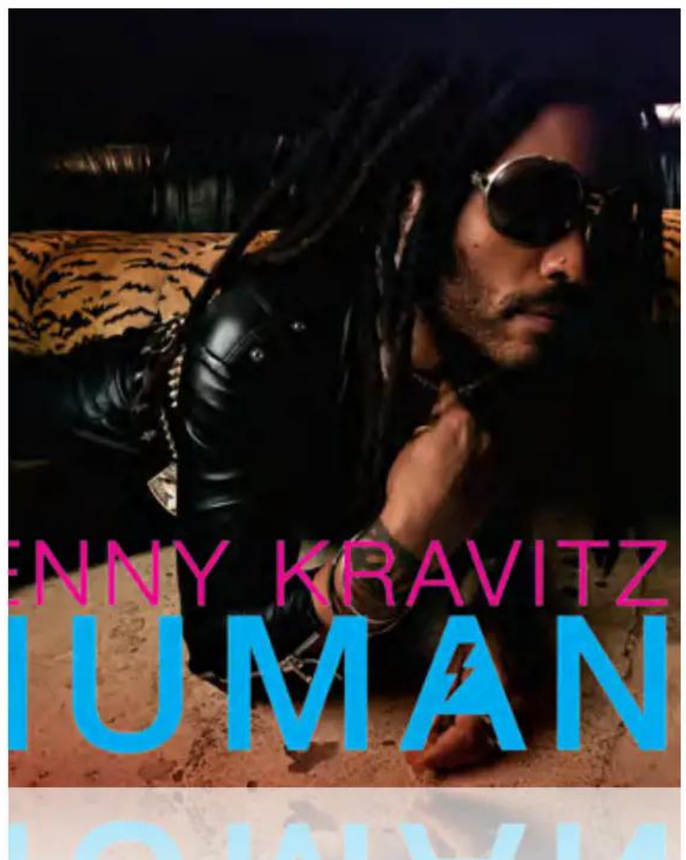

RETROPOP PLAYLIST

The latest releases from your favourite **RETROPOP** artists - all in one place!

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK - *KIDS* (BMG)
The lead single from NKOTB's first album in over a decade sees the boys back at their best, channeling the essence of the group's '80s spirit underpinned by refreshingly current synths and beats.

GIRLS ALOUD - *WICKED GAME* (Polydor)
Finally released after 20 years, the scrapped single from Girls Aloud's second album, 'What Will The Neighbours Say?', is a highlight of the recently-released deluxe expanded edition of the LP.

LENNY KRAVITZ - *HUMAN* (BMG)
The latest track from the rocker's forthcoming album 'Blue Electric Light' is an uplifting anthem for finding confidence in your existence and living life as you see it, on your own terms.

PHARRELL X MILEY CYRUS - *DOCTOR (WORK IT OUT)* (Columbia)
A pulsing, poptastic outtake from Miley's 2013 LP 'Bangerz', the track has been dusted off from the vaults after being previewed at the Louis Vuitton Men's Autumn/Winter 2024 Fashion Show in Paris.

KATE NASH - *MILLIONS OF HEARTBEATS* (Kill Rock Stars)
Twinkling pianos and soaring strings underpin a cinematic ode to finding faith in a mixed up world and the yearning desire to connect with other human beings when times are tough.

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT X ULTRA NATÉ - *EVERY EMOTION* (YSKWN!)
Another cut fit for the dance floor, the latest single from 'Enjoy Youth' sees BLBL join forces with the '90s club icon on a powerhouse collaboration that builds to a rousing crescendo.

BLANCMANGE - *AGAIN, I WAIT FOR THE WORLD* (London)
A lost track dating back to Neil Arthur's pre-Blancmange project L360 way back in 1979, the tune has been revisited and revamped, making for an apt addition to his 45-year retrospective LP.

TRAVIS - *GASLIGHT* (BMG)
The lead single from the band's 10th album 'L.A. Times' is laden with horns, handclaps and a symphonic sunburst of gang vocals shot through the chorus which sees the band back at their best.

MARC ALMOND - *ELUSIVE BUTTERFLY* (BMG)
Fresh from a Top 10 comeback with Soft Cell, Marc's new track is a U-turn from the duo's synth-heavy sound, introducing his new covers LP with a clean, organic reinterpretation of the folk classic.

BON JOVI - *LEGENDARY* (Island)
An anthemic return from the rock icons is the latest step in their ongoing 40th anniversary celebrations, typically stadium-sized and packing a hefty punch thanks to Jon Bon Jovi's powerhouse delivery.

HOW TO LISTEN

Scan the QR code and check out all the **RETROPOP** *playlists in one place, over on Spotify!*

Top Of The Pops *tales*

Step back in time as we revisit classic moments from the 'Top Of The Pops' archives!

#24 ROBBIE WILLIAMS UNCAGES HIS TIGER

August 11, 2000: Robbie Williams – *Rock DJ*

With the release of his 11th solo hit, Robbie Williams had two bites at the cherry when it came to shocking the 'Top Of The Pops' audience.

First of all, the video for *Rock DJ* premiered on the July 7, 2000 edition – or at least, the first two minutes did. The rest – which features Williams trying to attract the attention of a honey on the decks by stripping down to his pants... then going *much* too far by peeling off skin and flesh, until he's just a dancing skeleton – was only shown on the late-night repeat a couple of days later. (A better outcome, incidentally, than in the Dominican Republic, where the clip was banned for being "against the moral and religious customs of the Dominican people".)

On the same night he filmed an intro for this exclusive, Williams recorded a couple of in-studio performances to air at a later date. The second of these features the singer pulling his trousers down – revealing the same pair of pants. Later they gradually slip down until he's shuffling about the stage with them gathered around his ankles. Cue some cheeky pelvic thrusting. Presumably anxious to minimise this, the producers of 'TOTP' took the unusual step of framing the latter part of the performance with the end credits, thereby shrinking Williams' bulge.

The pants – black, with a roaring tiger's head on the crotch – were the idea of video director Vaughan Arnell, who explained the inspiration to Metro in 2020. "Do you remember in the old days there was an advert, I think it was for Esso, and it said, 'Put a tiger in your tank'?... That's where I got the idea from, to put a tiger in Robbie's tank basically."

Unsurprisingly, Robbie's high jinks caused a little fuss. The Broadcasting Standards Commission later adjudicated on 12 complaints. In defending the clip, the BBC argued: "His performance was comic; the figure he cut while trying to dance with his jeans around his ankles was hardly erotic." The BSC concurred, concluding that "the performance had been more farcical than real."

The following year, those iconic pants did some good; though the originals were lost (prompting a campaign in The Sun to locate them), a similar pair were put up for sale as part of an auction in aid of Williams's Give It Sum charity and raised £4,200 of a grand total of £165,680, which was put towards building a new wing for art and drama at Williams's old secondary school in Stoke-on-Trent. **RP**

● ***Follow @TOTPFacts on Twitter for live trivia commentary on the BBC Four repeats.***

TOP 10
THE OFFICIAL CHART FOR AUGUST 6, 2000

1 ROBBIE WILLIAMS
Rock DJ

2 CRAIG DAVID 7
Days

3 STORM
Time To Burn

4 BOMFUNK MC'S
Freestyler

5 RONAN KEATING
Life Is A Rollercoaster

6 FIVE + QUEEN
We Will Rock You

7 EMINEM
The Real Slim Shady

8 MANSUN
I Can Only Disappoint U

9 LOUISE
2 Faced

10 WOOKIE FEATURING LAIN
Battle

WORDS IAN BERRIMAN **PHOTOS** BBC / TOP OF THE POPS

LINE-UP NEWS

GLASTONBURY 2024 LINE-UP

Dua Lipa, Coldplay and SZA will headline Glastonbury 2024.

Organisers recently announced the first wave of acts for this year's event, with country-pop superstar Shania Twain to perform the Sunday afternoon "legends slot".

Other names set to perform include Avril Lavigne, Cyndi Lauper, Janelle Monáe, Jessie Ware, Sugababes - check out the full line-up over on our website.

Several of the acts were quick to hit up social media, including Lipa – who recently announced her third album 'Radical Optimism' – with a post sharing: "FRIDAY NIGHT PYRAMID STAGE HEADLINE!!!!

"I have dreamt of this moment all my life. Something that lived only in my wildest dreams and highest manifestations !!! I am so excited to see you all in my favourite place on earth and make it a night to remember!!"

Meanwhile, Twain – who will perform a run of dates across the UK and Ireland this summer – added: "Another jewel in my crown!

"I feel so honoured and so excited about this one! Thinking about what to wear already... Let's make history this summer with this ultimate dream performance."

Tickets for this year's Glastonbury sold out in under an hour when they went on sale in November. A resale is expected in April.

PHOTOS JAMES MARCUS HANEY; LOUIE BANKS

BON JOVI AT 40

Bon Jovi are continuing their 40th anniversary celebration with their brand new album, 'Forever'.

Due June 7, the 16th album from the group features lead single *Legendary*, out now, and follows Jon Bon Jovi's 2024 MusiCares Person Of The Year honour.

Of the album, the frontman says: "This record is a return to joy. From the writing, through the recording process, this is turn up the volume, feel good Bon Jovi."

Celebrating the milestone, the four-part docuseries 'Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story' will debut on HULU on April 26 in the US and on Disney+ in the UK.

This marks the first-ever docuseries on the band's history that has been made with full cooperation from all past and present members of Bon Jovi.

For full details and pre-order links, visit our website.

PHOTO MARK SELIGER

IN THE LOOP

KYLIE MINOGUE has hinted at a collaboration with **MADONNA** after the two performed together

ERIC CARMEN - singer-songwriter best known for *All By Myself* and *Hungry Eyes* - has died aged 74

ALISON MOYET joined **GOSSIP** on stage for a performance of Yazoo's *Situation*

SPICE GIRLS will announce a new project later this year

'80S ICONS IN NOW MUSICAL

'NOW That's What I Call A Musical' has announced a line-up of '80s icons to appear in the live theatre show.

Nina Wadia will star as Gemma in the world premiere of the production, written by comedian Pippa Evans and directed and choreographed by Craig Revel Horwood, which begins performances on September 6, 2024 at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre before commencing a UK and Ireland tour.

Joining Nina at certain performances will be an array of special guest stars playing themselves and singing the songs that made them icons.

Sinitta will perform in Aylesbury, Sheffield, Canterbury, Nottingham and Norwich with Sonia in Newcastle, Cardiff, Milton Keynes and Brighton, Carol Decker in Truro, Belfast and Woking, and Jay Osmond in Bradford and Dartford.

Further guest stars and musical cast members are to be announced.

NOW That's What I Call A Musical' features some of the biggest hits from the 1980s, with tracks from Whitney Houston, Wham!, Blondie, Tears For Fears, Spandau Ballet and others.

A synopsis reads: "It's Birmingham, 1989. Two school friends, Gemma and April, are busy with very important business - planning their lives based on Number One Magazine quizzes and dreaming of snogging Rick Astley.

"Cut to Birmingham 2009 and it's the most dreaded event of their lives– the school reunion. Drama, old flames and receding hairlines come together as friends reunite and everything from the past starts to slot into place. The biggest question is: what was with all that hairspray?"

For full details and tickets, visit our website.

PHOTO OLIVER ROSSER

PHOTO TREVOR LEI

KATE BUSH IS RSD AMBASSADOR

Kate Bush has been announced as an ambassador for this year's Record Store Day.

The pop legend says it's a "great privilege" to support the event on April 20, which champions independent record shops.

"Isn't it great to see how the resurgence in vinyl has taken the music industry by surprise?" adds Bush.

"It had decided to leave vinyl far behind, but it would seem that not everyone agrees! I love that!"

The *Running Up That Hill* singer continues: "I know there are many, many artists who are just as excited to see the audience turning the tide."

This year's Record Store Day will see hundreds of limited edition releases from acts including David Bowie, Fleetwood Mac, Emma Bunton, Dead Or Alive and Steps.

As an ambassador, Bush will help to promote the event and will also release a special 10" vinyl of *Eat The Music*, from her 1993 album 'The Red Shoes'.

"The title, *Eat The Music*, is meant to be a playful nod to 'If music be the food of love, play on,' from Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night'," she adds of the release.

Record Store Day 2024 takes place April 20.

LIAM GALLAGHER and **JOHN SQUIRE**'s debut album as a duo topped the UK charts

BUSTED are working on a new album with **BRING ME THE HORIZON** star **JORDAN FISH**

KESHA is officially free from her contract with **DR. LUKE**

USHER will now perform a total of 10 shows at The O2, London as part of his 'Past Present Future' run

NKOTB ARE BACK

PHOTO AUSTIN HARGRAVE

New Kids On The Block have announced their brand new album, 'Still Kids', on May 17 – the band's first in 11 years.

On the all new album, Jonathan Knight, Jordan Knight, Joey McIntyre, Donnie Wahlberg and Danny Wood channel the group's beginnings while pushing their sound forward.

"It's the most mature album we've ever made," says Donnie, who is credited as creative director and co-wrote seven of the tracks on 'Still Kids'. "Yet it's the most fun and most comfortable album we've ever made."

Joey McIntyre – who co-wrote another six tracks – adds: "It says a lot about any band to make a record that has energy and passion and lightness and fun and depth – after almost 40 years together? It's crazy."

"This album, more than any other, is bringing the New Kids and the fans full circle," Donnie concludes. "It's about hope and possibilities and being ourselves."

For full details and pre-order links, visit our website.

STEVIE NICKS' BST RETURN

Fleetwood Mac legend Stevie Nicks is set to headline American Express presents BST Hyde Park this summer.

The *Stand Back* hitmaker tops the bill on July 12, with a full line-up of support acts to be announced in the coming weeks.

"Anything that draws me back to London ~ and therefore to England ~ fills my heart with joy. And to be able to visit and make music... is always a dream come true..." says the musician.

Nicks last played the event in 2017 with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, with their performance of *Stop Draggin' My Heart Around* marking their final public appearance together.

The *Edge Of 17* star joins BST headliners SZA (June 29), Kings Of Leon (June 30), Morgan Wallen (July 4), Andrea Bocelli (July 5), Robbie Williams (July 6), Shania Twain (July 7), Kylie Minogue (July 13) and K-pop stars Stray Kids (July 14).

Tickets for all shows are on sale now.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

IN THE LOOP

S CLUB have each had matching tattoos in honour of PAUL CATTERMOLE

BOYZLIFE are returning to the road for a 2025 UK tour

CHER has been honoured with the Icon prize at the iHeartRadio Music Awards

***NSYNC** appear on **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE**'s new track *Paradise*

PHOTO JUERGEN TELLER

NENEH CHERRY GETS PERSONAL

Neneh Cherry will release her first-ever memoir later this year.

The Swedish star's new tome, 'A Thousand Threads', will be published by Penguin imprint Fern Press on October 3 and is billed as a "deeply personal and powerful" insight into her life and career.

A statement from the publisher reads: ""Top Of The Pops', December 1988. The world sat up as a young woman made her debut: gold bra, gold bomber jacket, and proudly, gloriously, seven months pregnant. This was no ordinary artist. This was Neneh Cherry.

"But navigating fame and family wasn't always simple. In this beautiful and deeply personal memoir, Cherry remembers the collaborations, the highs and lows, the friendships and loves, and the addictions and traumas that have shaped her as a woman and an artist. At the heart of it, always, is family: the extraordinary three generations of artists and musicians that are her inheritance and her legacy.

"'A Thousand Threads' is a kaleidoscopic story. It celebrates the power of love and the joy of creativity. Above all, it is a call to arms: to own your journey and always take a stance."

For full details and pre-order links, visit our website.

Kate Nash's Sad Symphonies

Kate Nash will release her new album, '9 Sad Symphonies, on June 21.

The LP is the first from the singer-songwriter in nine years – her fifth overall – and her first to be released via US record label Kill Rock Stars.

It draws on "inspiration from old Hollywood glamour, vintage musicals, and the relentless pursuit of beauty in a chaotic world."

Of the release, which reunites Nash with Danish producer Frederick Thaae, she adds: "We were in this completely different landscape for writing songs [on the musical], which was completely freeing.

"I was writing for a story, I was writing about a King and a Queen and a proper story arc. In that world you need the audience to understand the songs immediately, it's very direct, and it has lots of editing which I'd never done. It changed my outlook on songwriting.

"Also, we said at the beginning that we wanted to make something beautiful, nothing harsh. I've done a lot of harsh stuff before. We wanted loads of beautiful string arrangements."

In support of the release, she'll hold a launch event at EartH in London on May 17, followed by a headline show on November 28 at KOKO.

For full details and pre-order links, visit our website.

PHOTO ALICE BAXLEY

A lost **ABBA** performance will air on the BBC during the band's 50th anniversary celebrations

GIRLS ALOUD and **MIKA** will headline Brighton Pride 2024 on August 3 and 4

ETERNAL have announced new member **CHRISTEL LAKHDAR** following the departures of **LOUISE REDKNAPP** and **KÉLLÉ BRYAN**

PET SHOP BOYS' 'Closer To Heaven' is set for a London revival at Battersea Power Station's Turbine Theatre

LINE-UP NEWS

TRAVIS MAKE L.A. TIMES

Travis return with their 10th album, 'L.A. Times', on July 12 via BMG.

The latest offering from Glasgow's multiple BRIT and Ivor Novello-winning group is billed as their "most personal" album since 'The Man Who' (1999), which featured the global hit single *Why Does It Always Rain On Me?*.

"There was a lot of big stuff to write about back then, the tectonic plates had shifted in my life," says frontman Fran Healy. "I was 22 when I was writing those songs. They were my therapy. Over 20 years later and the plates have shifted again. There's a lot to talk about."

Alongside the album announcement, the group released *Gaslight*, their first new music since 2020, marking 25 years since their breakthrough, chart-topping second LP.

"I read a few weeks ago that gaslighting was the most web searched word in the world," adds Healy. "We are living in a time where our realities are being warped by bosses, leaders, friends, teachers and politicians. It really is everywhere.

"Gaslighters want to control you. They tell you things which undermine your confidence in yourself and make you question reality and it makes you feel like you're going crazy."

It comes ahead of a busy summer for the band, who will perform with The Killers across their 16 date UK arena tour through June and July, with more shows to be announced.

For full details and pre-order links, visit our website.

PHOTO STEVE GULLICK

MARC ALMOND'S SOLO RETURN

Marc Almond is back with his latest solo album, 'I'm Not Anyone', out July 12 on BMG.

Coinciding with his 45th year in music, the LP features covers spanning genres, from psychedelic and prog rock to folk, gospel and soul.

Alongside the album announcement, the singer released his interpretation of Bob Lind's esoteric 1965 folk classic *Elusive Butterfly*, which has been covered by everyone from Aretha Franklin to Cher and Dolly Parton.

Marc says: "I simply can't just sing any song; I have to feel that if I could I would have written it myself... It's just that someone else said it first, and far better than me."

For full details and pre-order links, visit our website.

PHOTO NICK SPANOS

IN THE LOOP

BEYONCÉ worked on 'Cowboy Carter' prior to her previous album 'Renaissance'

GINA G's debut album 'Fresh!' is being reissued with previously-unheard material

PALOMA FAITH will release her memoir 'MILF' on June 6

Electronic duo **THE GRID** - starring Dave Ball and Richard Norris - will reunite for their first show in over 20 years this summer

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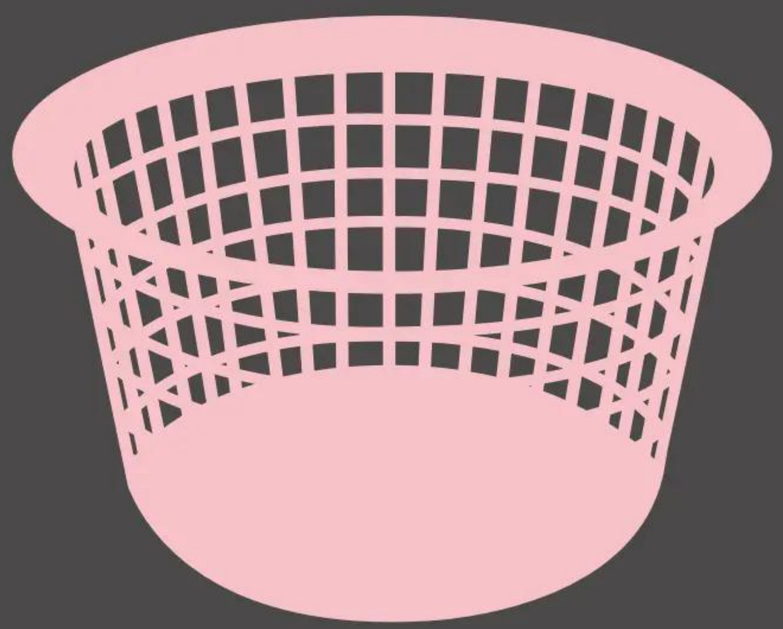

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As **Madonna** revisits 40 years of success with her global 'Celebration Tour', the hosts of the Inside The Groove podcast explore how she became an icon and the most successful solo female recording artist on the planet!

INSIDE THE GROOVE

● *For more Madonna, listen to Inside The Groove wherever you get your podcasts.*

CELEBRATION

RELEASED: **September 2009**

Madonna's third greatest hits collection was a far more rounded project than its predecessor, 'GHV2'.

The 2001 compilation had failed to include any new songs and with Madonna preoccupied filming 'Swept Away' with her then-husband Guy Ritchie, she failed to do any real promotion for it.

Tying the ends up for Warner Bros, with whom Madonna signed in 1982, this would be their final release (at that point) and would span her entire career, as well as including new material.

She contacted remixer, DJ and record producer Paul Oakenfold to record new material for her upcoming compilation and received 15 instrumental demos he had created with songwriters Ian Green and Ciaran Gribbin. Madonna selected two of these and began writing lyrics for songs that would be titled *Celebration* and *Broken*; the latter wouldn't make the final cut (though would be released to Madonna's fanclub in 2012), however *Celebration* was considered strong enough to be not only the lead single, but also the title of the release.

Madonna recorded two further tracks for the release: *Revolver* was written by US rapper Lil Wayne, with Madonna adding her vocals and changing a couple of lyrics, while a third song, *It's So Cool*, was made available as a bonus track on certain digital versions of the album.

Originally recorded for 'American Life', it was co-written by Mirwais and Madonna's guitar tutor, Monte Pitman, radically reworked for 'Celebration'.

The single *Celebration* was released in July to mixed reviews, with some critics drawing comparisons to Oakenfold's theme tune for Big Brother, but Madonna was so taken with a remix by Italian DJ Benny Benassi that she made it the official version for the video (in fact, there was a second video featuring die hard Italian fans of the singer along with her daughter Lourdes).

On its release, 'Celebration' came in a double album format, containing 36 tracks, along with an 18-track single disc format. Curiously, some songs were single edits or new, abridged cuts, whilst others, such as *Holiday* and *Frozen*, were the full-length album versions, clocking in at over six minutes each.

Created by street artist Thierry Guetta, aka Mr Brainwash, Madonna had been shown an image inspired by Andy Warhol's picture of Marilyn Monroe, originally created in 1967, that combined pop art with graffiti. Madonna felt it reflected the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring whilst modernising a 20th Century masterpiece – perfect for her album cover! The main image was a hybrid of two photos: the main features come from a 1990 photoshoot by Jean Baptiste Mondino taken a short while before Madonna and her team flew to Japan to begin the 'Blond Ambition World Tour', with hair from another iconic 1987 portrait by Alberto Tolot.

For the album's artwork, Madonna wanted a saturated, trippy feel to match the heavy dance vibes of the record. Directed by Giovanni Bianco, the photography was shot by Turkish duo Mert and Marcus. With a number of variants required, multiple setups were fulfilled, with the hero version of the album using a special effect created in post production that resembled Madonna looking through a corrugated glass door. The typography was sliced and manipulated to reflect the glitching effects used in the music.

WORDS EDWARD RUSSELL, JONATHAN PRYCE & PETER FALLOON **PHOTO** JEAN-BAPTISTE MONDINO

MDNA

RELEASED: **March 2012**

Madonna's first release under a three album deal for Interscope came almost four years since her previous studio record.

The delay was largely because Madonna had turned her attention to directing. Having first experimented as a filmmaker for the movie 'Filth And Wisdom', released in 2008, she began working on the movie that would become 'W.E.' shortly after completing the 'Sticky & Sweet Tour' in 2009.

She had planned to release 'W.E.' in May 2011 before commencing work on her album, but reshoots and further edits meant that she couldn't give music its fullest attention. With plans underway for a tour in 2012 and early talks for Madonna to launch her new record at the 46th Super Bowl Halftime Show, a new kind of creative process was used whereby Madonna selected several different producers to come to her with fully formed demos that she could reinterpret.

First of the new collaborations was with French musician Martin Solveig, who submitted a handful of songs he'd created with British artist Sunday Girl including *Tum Up The Radio*. There was also a new track written specifically for Madonna called *Give Me All Your Luvin'*, on which she changed the cheerleader-style chant from *M-A-D Madonna* to *L-U-V Madonna*.

Former collaborator William Orbit was also brought on board, contributing tracks like *Falling Free*, which he had recorded with American singer Laurie Mayer, along with *Love Spent* and *I'm A Sinner*, the latter of which was reworked in line with Orbit's 'Liquid Mix' of *Ray Of Light*, which was carried through to the tracks *Beautiful Stranger* and *Amazing* from the 'Music' album. The breakbeat and synth bass also made it onto another William Orbit production, *Black Coffee*, released by All Saints in 2000.

Although the Benny Benassi-produced *Girl Gone Wild* is pretty much a facsimile of the demo, she did go into the studio with the Italian DJ and his cousin Alle Benassi to create one of the album's standout tracks, *I'm Addicted*. Meanwhile *Gang Bang*, produced by Madonna, Orbit and The Demolition Crew, began life as *Bang Bang*, co-written by Mika, and was reworked with Quentin Tarrantino in mind to direct a possible video.

Tying the album to her film project, Madonna recorded the song *Masterpiece*, which would go on to win a Golden Globe for Best Original Song.

The album's title was suggested by *Give Me All Your Luvin'* collaborator, M.I.A. As well as a pun on the singer's name, it was a cheeky reference to the clubbing drug MDMA, also known as ecstasy, along with a reference to Mitochondrial DNA - the part of our genetics inherited from our mothers.

Airing live from The O2, revisit all the highlights from the **2024 BRIT Awards**!

BEST OF BRITISH

Dua Lipa opened the show in style

Ellie Goulding and Calvin Harris got The O2 on its feet

Calvin Harris took home the Dance Act prize

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Rising Star winners The Last Dinner Party made a statement

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THE WINNERS

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RAYE featuring 070 Shake – *Escapism*

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RAYE

GROUP OF THE YEAR

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Calvin Harris

R&B ACT

RAYE

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Bring Me The Horizon

HIP HOP/GRIME/RAP ACT

Casisdead

POP ACT

Dua Lipa

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST OF THE YEAR

SZA

INTERNATIONAL SONG

Miley Cyrus – *Flowers*

MASTERCARD ALBUM OF THE YEAR

RAYE – 'My 21st Century Blues'

SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

RAYE

PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

Chase & Status

GLOBAL ICON AWARD

Kylie Minogue

Bring Me The Horizon won Alternative/Rock Act

Olly Alexander looked suave ahead of Eurovision season

Becky Hill performed with Producer of the Year winners Chase & Status

Nigerian Afrowave Rema gave a standout performance of *Calm Down*

Caroline Polachek oozed glamour in a striking gown

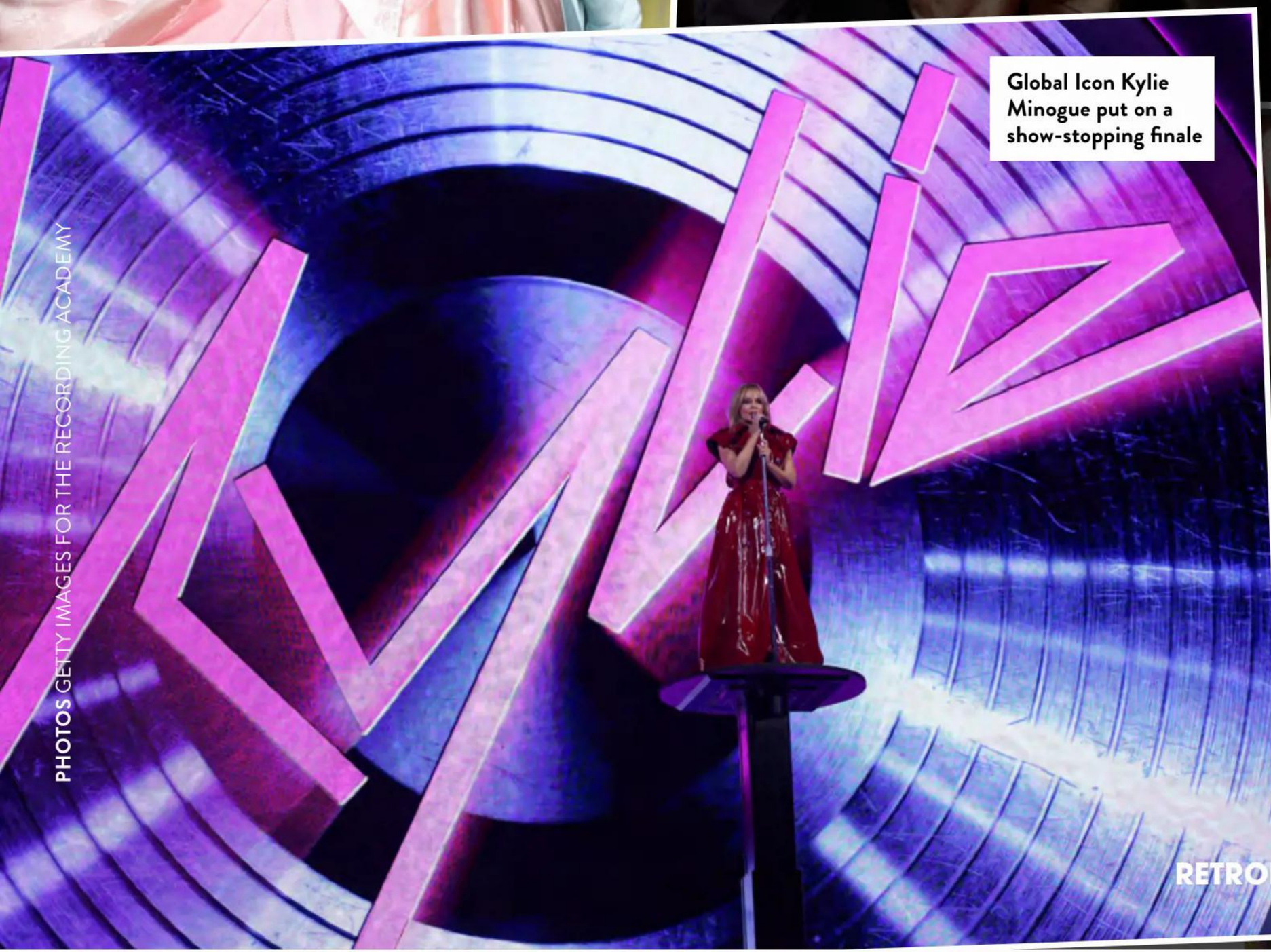
Tate McRae proved herself to be the new pop girl on the scene

Green Day's Tré Cool and Billie Joe Armstrong were among the presenters on the night

Charli XCX looked glam having launched her latest era

Group Of The Year winners Jungle threw it back with a retro performance

Casisdead won Hip Hop/Grime/Rap Act



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Spice Girl Melanie C brought girl power to the red carpet

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FLASHBACK

JUDIE TZUKE

With a new album and tour on the horizon, **Judie Tzuke** looks back on 45 years in music!

Signed to Elton John's Rocket, Judie Tzuke enjoyed a 1979 Top 20 hit with *Stay With Me Till Dawn* and it would prove to be her only successful single. "But that song gave me a career," she says now. "I feel I've written songs that are much better than that one but it was the right song at the right time."

There's the merest hint of a sigh as she adds: "Sometimes I get frustrated because I want people to hear all of my songs and love them all like they love *Stay With Me Till Dawn*. But I still sing it and I always will because I know that people want to hear it. And I'm grateful for it because it gave me the opportunity to keep making music."

The single's success helped propel Judie's debut album 'Welcome To The Cruise' (1979) to No. 14 in the UK. Follow-up 'Sports Car' (1980) did even better, peaking at No. 7 and establishing Tzuke as more of an album artist, which suited her just fine.

"I remember saying, 'I don't need to be famous, I don't need to make loads of money, I just want to make music that other musicians like'. And I've done that. I've not made loads of money. I'm not really famous. But when I meet musicians they say they like me."

The fans have stuck by her too. Her newest album 'Jude The Unsinkable' is her 22nd overall and the 13th on her own Big Moon label. The title is an intriguing one. "It's an album that sums up the survival of the last 11 years," elaborates Tzuke, who in that time overcame cancer of the womb, lost her family home when the bank gave her just four months to pay off her mortgage and suffered badly with Covid.

"It's quite weird when you go to bed thinking you might not wake up, because I kept choking in the night with the coughing. Thankfully I got through it and I wrote the title track about two weeks into my recovery. I was sitting out in the garden in the sun and I just thought: 'God, I'm still here'."

Judie has always been a survivor, tenaciously hanging onto a career in music. "I've survived in my own little bubble really, because I'm not a major artist and I'm not with a major label anymore. Even when I first started, I wrote for my own cathartic purposes because I was always a bit of a depressive young teenager."

In 1977, the London-born musician went along to Rocket and so impressed managing director David Crocker with her demos that he signed her on the spot. Elton sent her a bunch of flowers, welcoming her to the label, and she ended up supporting him on tour. "It was at a period in his life where there were a lot of substances being used and abused," she recalls. "I think it's a lot easier to know who he is now than who he was then, but he was always kind to me."

UK female singer-songwriters were a rarity in the '70s, with Tzuke part of a select group that included Kate Bush and Joan Armatrading. "For a girl in the business at that point it was quite difficult," she recalls. "I wish that I'd had more girlfriends that were doing the same kind of thing."

It was only when she made an album with Beverley Craven and Julia Fordham under the banner of Woman To Woman in 2018, then toured with them, that she really felt part of a sisterhood. "We found we had a lot in common, like #MeToo moments and the pressure female artists are put under when the record company wants you to look a certain way."

Judie has her own tour coming up in October. She has spoken in the past about suffering from stage fright. "And I still have it," she confesses. "Whenever I used to hear my stuff back live, I always thought I was awful. I did Glastonbury many years ago, I had a really bad throat at the time and thought I was singing terribly. But then much later I saw it on YouTube and it wasn't bad. That was quite shocking because in my head at the time it was diabolical."

Now 67, she adds: "But I've learned that my audiences aren't coming to see me fail. I can make mistakes and they don't mind. They either like me or they don't." She smiles: "And hopefully they like me." **RP**

● ***'Jude The Unsinkable' is out on April 5 on Big Moon. For live dates visit tzuke.com.***

WORDS SIMON BUTTON **PHOTO** COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

TRACK BY TRACK

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT
ENJOY YOUTH

Returning with his euphoric fifth studio album, **Bright Light Bright Light** - aka Rod Thomas - takes a deep dive into the star-studded set!

1 YOU WANT MY ...

My favourite instrumental that Ian Masterson has sent for me to write to. This sounded like Pet Shop Boys meets 'Queer As Folk' to me, so I wanted to write something flirty, sexy and fun. In the instrumental there was a little hi-hat sound in the chorus that sounded like the word 'sex', so I took that word and moulded the rest of the lyrics to fall on that on each line.

The title is a nod to George Michael's *I Want Your Sex* and the way I say the word "sex" is also a reference to Goldie Hawn saying "sex" while seducing Bruce Willis in 'Death Becomes Her'. CAMP!

2 SNAP!

Another Ian Masterson instrumental that sent me into space. It made me feel like I was in a 90s video game, going 1000 miles an hour and feeling fabulous. I wrote the lyrics about feeling that massive adrenaline rush of like: "Oh my God is this it! Is this the win!". To have even more fun I asked Berri, one of my favourite '90s pop stars, to add vocals to the song and it was so much fun. I am SO proud of this song.

3 REVIVED

Jon Shave is an amazing songwriter and producer I've worked with since before my debut album (we wrote MANY of my songs together). He sent me a batch of one-minute ideas to write to and I took the punch of Jon's beats and the strut in the production and made a song about self-belief and self-worth.

Jon had worked with Sam Harper on the Riton hit *Friday* and I LOVE her voice, so he asked her to add some dance diva vocals to the song and she elevated it from good to sublime in my mind.

4 EVERY EMOTION

Teenage me 100 per cent cannot process the fact that I have Ultra Naté on a song that I have written. I love this woman SO much.

I wrote this song one day after a few mimosas. I'd been listening to lots of classic NY house tracks after moving into Manhattan and found this Rhodes sample that reminded me of Masters At Work / NuYorican soul.

When I found out that working with Ultra was a possibility, I added in the "lalala"parts as an homage to her "na na na na!" in *Found A Cure* - one of my FAVOURITE songs of hers.

5 BOYS ETC.

Silly, flirty, sassy, fun. Initially this started as a slinky little electro number based on samples from 'Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past' and it sounded TOTALLY different. I sat on it for years, and then one day when playing the saxophone I thought of a little brass line that sounded familiar, and it was a melody from this demo. So I completely reworked the instrumentation and suddenly it felt like a real song.

6 HEARTSLAP

If you don't know who Mykal Kilgore is, look him up. We've known each other for like 12 or 13 years and we were in a band together, fronted by Del Marquis of Scissor Sisters, called Slow Knights! I had written 90 per cent of *Heartslap* on a train to DC when Jon sent me a (VERY DIFFERENT!) instrumental that had a very dark pulsating beat. We switched up the production and arrived at this wild dance number that I LOVE. Mykal came over one day to help finish writing it and lay down the vocals and he decided we needed a rap section and that was that!

7 SWEET RELEASE

When Jon sent me the instrumental snippet that I wrote this song around, I just fell in love with the mood he created. The synths were so dreamy and so calm, but also very transcendent... I don't even remember writing the lyrics - they just kind of fell out. I love where this song ended up; I love the mood, I love the optimism.

8 I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GONNA DO

I actually had this written some time before thinking of a new album. The chorus lyrics nod to one of my favourite

'80s songs, *Clouds Across The Moon* by Rah Band, and this is the one moment on the album of loss and heartbreak that gives into a little defeat. I know that sad dance songs are kind of my thing, so I guess it makes sense!

9 DOWN TO ONE

I love old Italian horror films which feature strong, devious female characters, extreme fashion, jealousy, betrayal and camp. I'd just done my score for a documentary on International Male (an iconic fashion catalogue and brand) and used some of the sounds I'd made for that score to colour this dance song about rivalry, obsession and lust.

10 SWEETEST WASTE

I wrote this song a LONG time ago. I went into the studio with Babydaddy from Scissor Sisters and we came up with it pretty quickly. Production-wise, it's totally unlike anything I would do myself and has such a cool strut to it. I sat on it for years as I really wanted it to be a duet, but eventually Scott (Babydaddy) and I talked about it and he was like: 'Actually, I love it being just your voice".

11 KEEP

Speaking of all time pop heroes, I wrote this with Richard X! He's actually the person who inspired me to make mashups with his incredible 'Richard X Presents' album. I went to his studio in London years ago and we wrote this together on a couch that Sugababes and a number of UK pop stars had sat on.

I love Richard's production. He has such a weird, unique take on pop. It was actually very intimidating to write in a room with him as I'm such a fan and am very aware of his pop legacy.

This song is nothing like the rest of the album, but has a super special place for me as a song written with a good friend and a fantastic producer.

12 ENJOY YOUTH

Jon sent a 1 min 15 demo that sounded like being inside a Super Nintendo game and a film score at the same time, so I asked for the separate instrument files and played around creating the flow of this song. It made me feel so NOSTALGIC I decided to write the song about my best friend in the world, Janice.

We used to sing Beth Hirsch's songs together for hours, so I asked Beth to sing on it and when I played it to Janice she was so over the moon. Janice inspired me to take my life into my own hands and without her, I wouldn't be here. So I thank her, and Beth Hirsch whose voice soundtracked so many years, for helping me enjoy youth. **RP**

● ***'Enjoy Youth' is out May 17 on YSKWN!***

PHOTO AUSTIN RUFFER

QUICK READ

FINDING THE LIGHT

More than half a century after she secured her first record deal, **Susie Vanner** is having the time of her life as she rekindles her first love: music!

"I don't think about age - you're as old as you feel," declares singer, songwriter and actress Susie Vanner.

We sit down to discuss her forthcoming album 'That Kind Of Love'; the second offering from the multi-hyphenate since her return to recording, over half a century after she signed her first record deal with RCA at the age of 19. An early run of singles, written by Sandie Shaw collaborator Chris Andrews, led to session work and eventually an illustrious acting career, including appearances in 'Minder' and the 10th James Bond film, 'The Spy Who Loved Me', but in 2019, following a split from her husband of 32 years, she returned to her first love.

The seeds were sown a year and a half earlier. "I met this amazing record producer who was sitting next to me at a Shooting Star charity ball when I was still with my husband," Susie shares. "We were on Simon Cowell's table and he sat next to a lovely man who it turns out was Kipper Eldridge, who is a very famous, Grammy Award-winning record producer. He put up an auction to record a song of your choice at his studio in Hazelmere, so we put our hands up and we got it."

It was after their separation that a girlfriend encouraged Susie to get back in touch with Eldridge and go through with the session. She showed up prepared. "I chose two songs instead of one," she laughs. "I chose *Cry Me A River*, which I heard Diana Krall sing on her amazing album, and also Corrinne Bailey Rae's *Like A Star*.

"He was quite shocked, because he didn't know I could sing. And I didn't even know if I could still sing, because I hadn't done it since I was 19! But we got on so well together that we ended up recording the first album and we just did the second one."

I REALLY WANT TO INSPIRE PEOPLE THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS TO YOU IN LIFE, YOU CAN ALWAYS FORGE AHEAD AND MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN

The BBC Concert Orchestra features across the 13 songs recorded at London's Abbey Road Studios - a combination of cover versions from artists including The Rolling Stones (*Satisfaction*), Robbie Williams (*Feel*), Sheryl Crow (*All I Wanna Do*) and The Weeknd (*Earned It*), plus a run of originals co-written with Judie Tzuke, including the single *Sweeter Love*.

It's the first time she's ventured into songwriting, but after striking gold she's well and truly got the bug. "I don't play an instrument, unfortunately, so I've never been able to sit at the piano and write something. But writing with Judie and Kipper has been an amazing experience and something that I'm going to be doing more often, because I absolutely loved it."

The process, she admits, has "brought out so much in me and given me so much confidence in my voice", and things this time around are worlds apart from when she released her debut LP four years ago. "The whole Covid thing happened just after it was released, so everything had to stop," she sighs. "Hopefully this time I can continue the excitement a bit longer..."

Alongside the album, there's also a series of dance floor friendly remixes from the likes of Almighty, Until Dawn and Cahill. Her personal favourite is

the Until Dawn mix of *Feel*, which has proven to be a hit with her friends in St. Tropez too. "I know the manager at my favourite go-to club there, where everyone dances on tables and things, and he got the DJ to play it while he had me get up and dance with him!"

Relishing the experience of releasing an album has been a long time coming; Susie's mother played music around the family home while she was growing up and sang herself, prompting her daughter to follow suit, joining school choirs and taking part in talent contests. "I always won, because she had sent me to dancing school and even though I was really shy in real life, I loved being on stage," she beams.

It was an ad in a local paper that connected her with Andrews. "He lived in Hornchurch, Essex and I lived in Romford, so I took my mum along to meet him, he played piano and I sang *My Guy*, and he went, 'Yeah, I like that'," she recalls. "He said, 'What are you doing tomorrow?' I said, 'Nothing, actually, because I'm on holiday from school', and he said, 'Well, I'm going to RCA Records and I'd like to sign you up'. It was incredible."

She took her O-levels and A-levels, and while her mum encouraged her to go to university Susie went down the recording route, releasing three singles before taking up session work as a backing vocalist for acts including Blue Mink. "I loved session singing and it was very lucrative as well, so I really thought I'd end up being a singer, but then I met [talent agent] Hazel Malone and she got me on her books immediately."

It wasn't long before her biggest role came up in 'The Spy Who Loved Me', in one of the most iconic opening scenes in the franchise's history, which sees her as a honeytrap acting as bait in an attempt to assassinate 007 in the Swiss Alps. "And I'm still getting fan mail now," she beams. "Every week something comes in from Japan, from South America... It's amazing! My role was small, but everyone remembers it because of the stuff that happens after it. It's pretty iconic!"

She's appeared in the films on screen, but never on the soundtrack. "That's a good idea, isn't it," Susie grins. "That would be amazing. Even to have a song on a TV show or a Netflix series would be great."

In the years since, she's experienced her share of highs and lows, but having survived a life-threatening brain haemorrhage and cancer, looking to the future she radiates positivity: "I would love to do an amazing gig somewhere. I'd love to do more recording. And I really want to inspire people that whatever happens to you in life, you can always forge ahead and make something happen. And think positive, you know..." **RP**

● ***'That Kind Of Love' is out May 17 on Dolce Vanner.***

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Steps: Step One
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Steps: Steptacular
(Zoetrope Picture Disc)

Steps: Buzz
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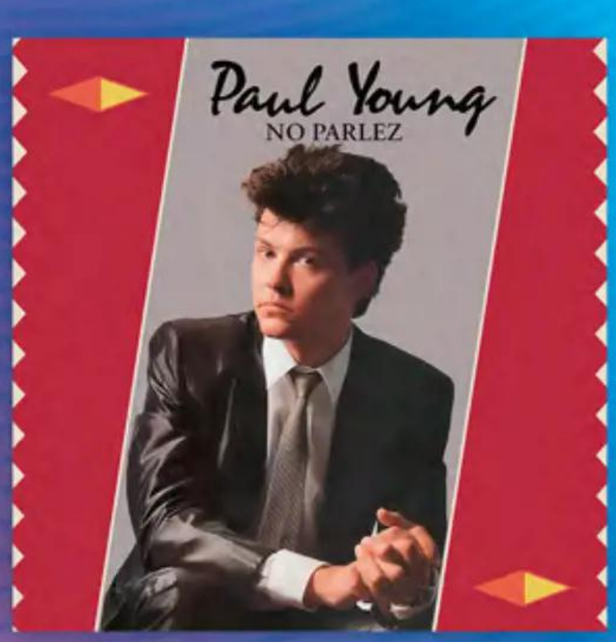


Paul Young: No Parlez (Blu Ray Audio/2CD)

DEMON MUSIC GROUP

For more information please visit **www.demonmusicgroup.co.uk**

IN THE MIX

DAVID KOSTEN ON DOLBY ATMOS

Having worked on immersive Dolby Atmos mixes from *Murder On The Dancefloor* to 'Tubular Bells', producer **David Kosten** opens up on the laborious process.

"If you think about one three- or four- minute song, you're adding backing vocals, guitar parts, keyboard parts, drum tracks - it adds up. So you end up with hundreds and hundreds of individual components that make up one song," says David Kosten, explaining the process behind piecing together Dolby Atmos mixes at the company's Soho Square headquarters in London during a playback of Paul Young's 'No Parlez'.

Originally developed for cinemas to create immersive soundscapes for movies, Dolby Atmos has since made its way into the realm of music production, offering listeners a whole new dimension of auditory engagement. At its core, a Dolby Atmos mix for music involves creating a three-dimensional sonic environment where sounds can move dynamically around the listener, enveloping them from all directions.

To create a Dolby Atmos mix, producers utilise a sophisticated system of audio objects and channels. Rather than traditional stereo or surround sound setups, Dolby Atmos employs an object-based audio approach, allowing each sound element to be treated as an individual entity with its own positional data. This enables precise placement and movement of sounds in a three-dimensional space, offering unparalleled creative freedom to artists and producers.

"It's not like taking a stereo mix and using AI to do a quick job of putting this into immersive audio," insists the producer of his work on Young's classic debut LP. "We literally found the original 24-track multitracks, transferred them at a ridiculous resolution - it's the first record I've ever worked on at 192 - and those are the files that I got sent."

The overall effect of a Dolby Atmos mix is truly immersive. Listeners are transported into the heart of the music, as sounds swirl around them, above them and even below them. This heightened sense of spatial awareness enhances the impact of the music, drawing listeners deeper into the sonic landscape crafted by the artist.

But when it comes to reconfiguring classic recordings, it can be a challenge to recreate that tracks faithfully to the originally-released versions, depending on the state of the multitracks. "I just did *Murder On The Dancefloor* from the original multitrack and that basically is exactly what you hear. They use some demo vocal on it, but essentially it's all there on that multi," he reflects. "But on this one, most of the songs had six or seven different edits to them, and you've got to go through the recordings to find those edit points. Just figure it out. You know, hear a drum fill that happens before the editing and find that drum fill somewhere. So it was a very different beast."

On the extent of the challenge, he elaborates: "I reckon less than five per cent of the effects and time-based stuff, like reverb and delays, were there. If you just hit 'go' on that 24-track, it sounds nothing like the final mix."

One of the key benefits of Dolby Atmos for music is its ability to deliver a more lifelike and realistic listening experience. By accurately recreating the way sound behaves in physical space, Dolby Atmos also allows listeners to feel as though they are in the same room as the performers, regardless of where they are actually listening from. This level of immersion not only enhances the enjoyment of music but also fosters a deeper connection between the listener and the artist's creative vision.

Additionally, it opens up new possibilities for artistic expression and sonic innovation; artists and producers can experiment with spatial audio effects, such as placing instruments in unconventional locations or creating intricate soundscapes that surround the listener from all angles.

Explaining some of the particular nuances on the 'No Parlez' project, he elaborates: "There's an amazing female vocal solo, almost like an instrument they use on *Come Back And Stay*, so I had a bit of fun with that. It's like in 'Raiders Of The Lost Ark' where the ghost flies out and zooms around you. That's how I imagined that vocal."

This creative freedom empowers musicians to push the boundaries of traditional stereo mixing and deliver truly groundbreaking musical experiences. In essence, Dolby Atmos isn't just a new way of listening to music – it's a transformative technology that redefines the very nature of musical expression. **RP**

● ***'No Parlez (40th Anniversary)' is out now on Demon.***

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO **PHOTO** COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

EUROVISION

SONG CONTEST

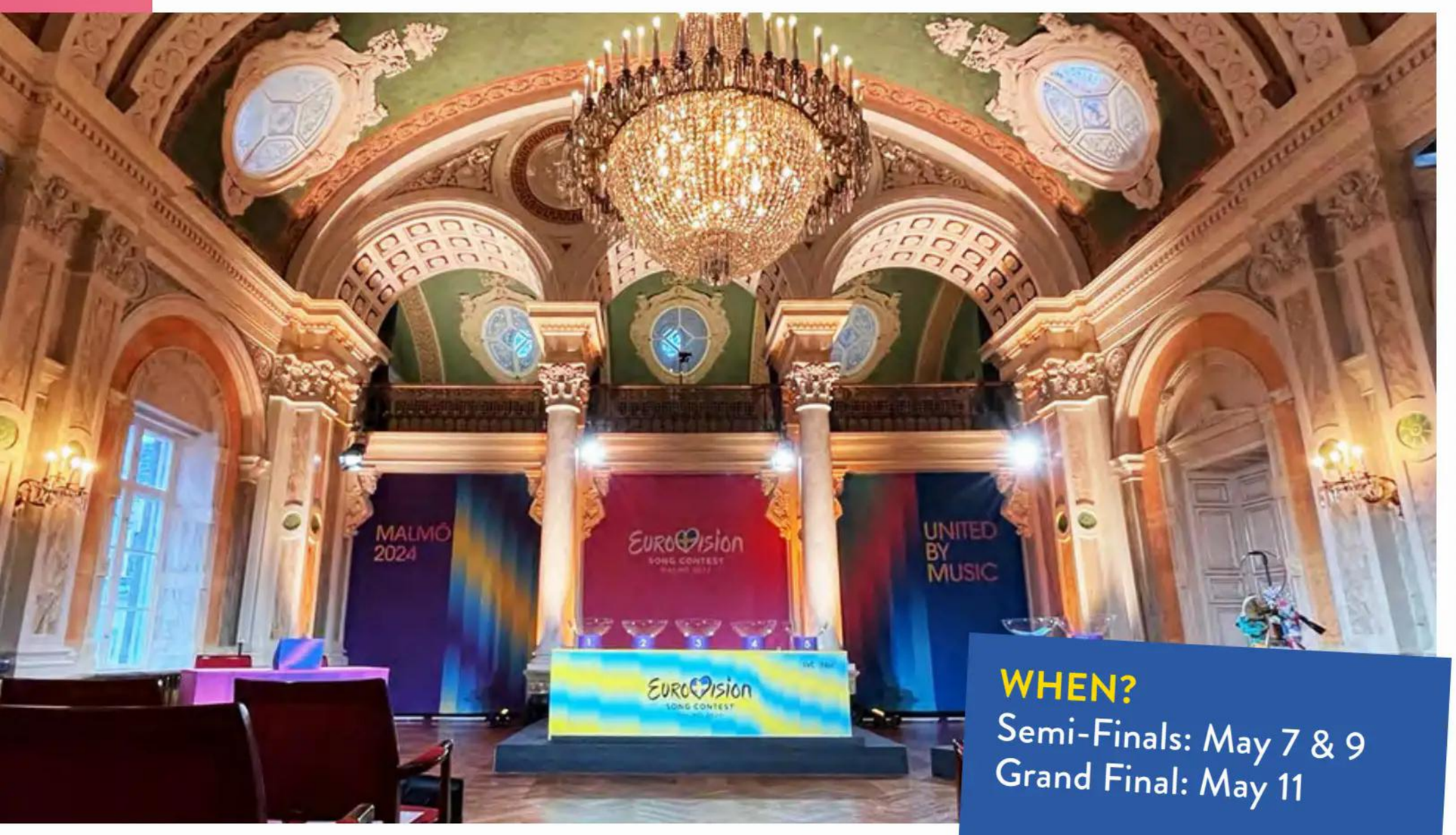
MALMÖ 2024

Hello Europe!

As the biggest show in music heads to Malmö, Sweden, we bring you the ultimate guide to the 68th **Eurovision Song Contest**!

PHOTO MALMO.SE

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST MALMÖ 2024



As Eurovision returns to Sweden for the seventh time following Loreen's record-breaking win, here's all the key info for **Eurovision 2024**!

Launching on May 7 with the first of two Semi-Finals, the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest will see a total of 31 countries take to the stage during the preliminary rounds, with 10 acts from each heat progressing to the Grand Final.

Fifteen acts will participate in the first Semi-Final with their respective countries, plus Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as non-participating countries under an aggregated vote as 'Rest of the World', allowed to vote, sending home five acts in the process.

For the second Semi-Final, the remaining 16 acts will participate to win the votes of their countries along with France, Italy and Spain, along with non-participating countries, and progress to the main event.

This year, for the very first time, the artists from the Big Five countries - France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom – and host nation Sweden will each perform their entries in full live during the Semi-Finals on the same night that they have been drawn to vote in. However, they will not be a part of the public vote.

The Grand Final will see the 20 successful Semi-Finalists return to compete for the prize, alongside reigning champions Sweden and acts from the Big Five countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.

WHEN?
Semi-Finals: May 7 & 9
Grand Final: May 11

WHERE?
Malmö Arena
Malmö, Sweden

WHO?
37 countries will compete, with 26 progressing to the Grand Final

SEMI-FINAL 1
MAY 7

1st Half
UKRAINE
CYPRUS
POLAND
SERBIA
LITHUANIA
CROATIA
IRELAND

2nd Half
SLOVENIA
ICELAND
FINLAND
PORTUGAL
LUXEMBOURG
AUSTRALIA
AZERBAIJAN
MOLDOVA

SEMI-FINAL 2
MAY 9

1st Half
AUSTRIA
MALTA
SWITZERLAND
GREECE
CZECHIA
ALBANIA
DENMARK
ARMENIA

2nd Half
ISRAEL
ESTONIA
GEORGIA
NETHERLANDS
NORWAY
LATVIA
SAN MARINO
BELGIUM

MALMÖ CALLING

The 2024 Eurovision Song Contest will take place in Malmö, Sweden!

The city was selected following a bidding process that also saw Gothenburg, Örnsköldsvik and Stockholm show an interest in staging the show.

Swedish broadcaster SVT, together with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), will organise the Contest thanks to Loreen's historic win in Liverpool last year with *Tattoo*.

Eurovision Song Contest Executive Supervisor, Martin Österdahl, says: "The EBU is thrilled that Malmö has been selected as the Host City for the Eurovision Song Contest 2024. Malmö holds a special place in the history of the Contest, having successfully hosted it firstly in 1992 and then in 2013 – following Loreen's last win.

"We're excited to be returning to this vibrant and dynamic city which has demonstrated it has the venues and infrastructure that are perfect for staging the world's largest live music event.

"Malmö's commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and innovation aligns perfectly with the spirit of the competition. Furthermore, its compact size and well-developed transport infrastructure means everyone involved in the Contest, including delegations, media, and fans will be able to navigate the city easily.

"Its commitment to sustainability and green initiatives also aligns perfectly with our own values, making it an ideal Host City for the 68th Eurovision Song Contest.

"Malmö's bid demonstrated a huge passion for the Eurovision Song Contest, and I have full confidence in their ability to create an unforgettable experience that will bring together fans, artists, and viewers across the globe. Together with Host Broadcaster SVT, we will create an extraordinary celebration of music, unity, and diversity that will captivate the world in May next year."

It will be the city's third time hosting, following 1992 and 2013 editions, and the first time the Eurovision Song Contest hasn't visited a capital city for five consecutive Contests. Sweden previously staged the competition in Stockholm in 1975, 2000 and 2016, and in Gothenburg in 1985.

YOUR HOSTS

Malin Åkerman and Petra Mede will take to the stage as hosts of the 68th Eurovision Song Contest.

The Hollywood star and Eurovision veteran will appear live from Malmö for three spectacular shows, with Los Angeles-based Åkerman sharing her excitement and apprehension ahead of the gig.

"I can't really describe my feelings about this. I am very excited and a little nervous, but in a positive way," she says. "I have always liked Eurovision and to be a part of this fantastic show together with Petra is a dream come true. Additionally, Petra is one of the funniest women I've ever met.'

Petra - who previously hosted the show in 2013 and 2016 - adds: "Imagine getting the chance to host Eurovision once again! It's such an incredible honour. After first hosting it alone and then together with the delightful Måns Zelmerlöw by my side, I am now really looking forward to working with Malin. We don't know each other from before, but we have met a couple of times now, and I'm already completely sold. It's going to be a joy to work with her!"

PHOTO JANNE DANIELSSON SVT

MEET THE

Thirty-seven artists will compete in this year's Eurovision but a spot in the Grand Final isn't guaranteed. While the Big Five and Sweden are safe, a pair of cut-throat Semi-Finals will see the remaining 31 acts whittled down to 20 - but who gets your vote?

UNITED KINGDOM

PERFORMER:
OLLY ALEXANDER
SONG: *DIZZY*

As he embarks on the first release under his own name, Olly Alexander remains one of the world's most trailblazing modern pop stars.

Across three hugely successful albums to date, the singer and actor has scored two UK No. 1 albums and 10 UK Top 40 singles with Years & Years, while arenas and festivals worldwide and collaborated with the likes of Elton John, Kylie Minogue and Pet Shop Boys.

Heading into Eurovision, the hitmaker has teamed up with songwriter Danny L Harle - whose work includes Dua Lipa's *Houdini* and *Training Season*, Rina Sawayama's *Chosen Family* and Caroline Polachek's 'Pang' (2019) and 'Desire, I Want to Turn Into You' (2023) - on his entry *Dizzy*.

Of the song, he says: "I wrote the song last summer with Danny L Harle, we started off with the word *Dizzy* because it just popped into my head and I liked it. I was thinking about fun things that could make you dizzy and I remember saying *'dizzy from your kisses'* so the song is about feeling such an intense swell of emotion for someone they totally turn your world upside down and inside out."

Delving further into the production, he elaborates: "Danny and I believe music should transport you somewhere magical and we wanted to describe this magical place in the song; a place of beautiful gardens, eternal flowers and time turning endlessly in an ecstatic loop.

"We took the feeling of Dizziness and put that into the production, so there's a lot of undulating arpeggios, lilting harmonies and counter rhythms in the backing vocals. We were inspired by a lot of music we love from the '80s, like Erasure, Adamski and of course Pet Shop Boys."

In a press release, he added: "I've loved watching Eurovision ever since I was a little kid and I'm beyond excited to be taking part next year.

"As a young boy I always looked forward to this incredible event of unbridled joy, the wonderfully chaotic mix of musical styles, theatrical performances, heartfelt emotion and humour.

"I really can't believe I'm going to be a part of such a special legacy and fly the flag for the UK in the gayest way possible, it shall be an honour!

"I've wanted to do this for a long time and it feels like the right moment to start releasing music under my own name. I'm determined to give it everything I've got and put on an excellent and unforgettable performance for you all!"

Olly will be hoping to improve on the United Kingdom's performance last year, when Mae Muller finished in 25th place with *I Wrote A Song*.

WORDS: CONNOR GOTTO; EBU **PHOTO** BBC/UNIVERSAL MUSIC

CONTESTANTS

ALBANIA

PERFORMER: BESA KOKËDHIMA

SONG: *TITAN*

Besa Kokëdhima was born in Fier, Albania to mathematician parents, who encouraged her to develop her artistry from a very early age. This is reflected in her creativity, as BESA's music is a unique blend of genres ranging from pop to electronic, R&B to ballads, and everything in between. Domestically, she's known for her catchy hooks and exuberant performances, along with her activism on animal rights, social causes and equality.

ARMENIA

PERFORMER: LADANIVA

SONG: *JAKO*

LADANIVA is made up of Armenian vocalist Jaklin Baghdasaryan and French multi-instrumentalist Louis Thomas. From traditional Balkan melodies to the rhythms of maloya, jazz and reggae, the duo's songs have been said to transcend borders, blending traditional Armenian tunes with inspirations drawn from their extensive travels across Latin America, Africa and Réunion Island. Founded in 2019, the pair initially gained viral acclaim with their hit song *Vay Aman* in 2020, which showcased their fresh style and innovative approach to world music. Their debut album was released last year.

AUSTRALIA

PERFORMER: ELECTRIC FIELDS

SONG: *ONE MILKALI (ONE BLOOD)*

Electric Fields are the first duo to represent Australia at the Eurovision Song Contest. The pair previously took part in SBS' 2019 national selection show, 'Eurovision – Australia Decides', where they came a close second to Kate Miller-Heidke with their unforgettable track *2000 And Whatever*. The extraordinary voice of Zaachariaha Fielding and brilliance of producer and keyboardist Michael Ross unite in a way that merges traditional living culture with music that ranges from soulful pop to epic-scale electronica. Their song incorporates Yankunytjatjara; an Aboriginal language of the Anangu peoples, one of the oldest living cultures on earth.

AUSTRIA

PERFORMER: KALEEN

SONG: *WE WILL RAVE*

Performing has been part of Kaleen's life from an early age; the budding star won her first national dance championship at the age of seven – the first of more than 100 national and European championships, and five world championships. In 2021 Kaleen was the creative director for the Junior Eurovision Song Contest for Spain and Bulgaria, as well as the creative director for Spain and stage director for the entire production in 2022. At the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 in Liverpool, she supported Austria, Armenia, Germany, and Georgia with their stage performances.

PHOTOS EBU; EBU; NICK WILSON ; RANKIN

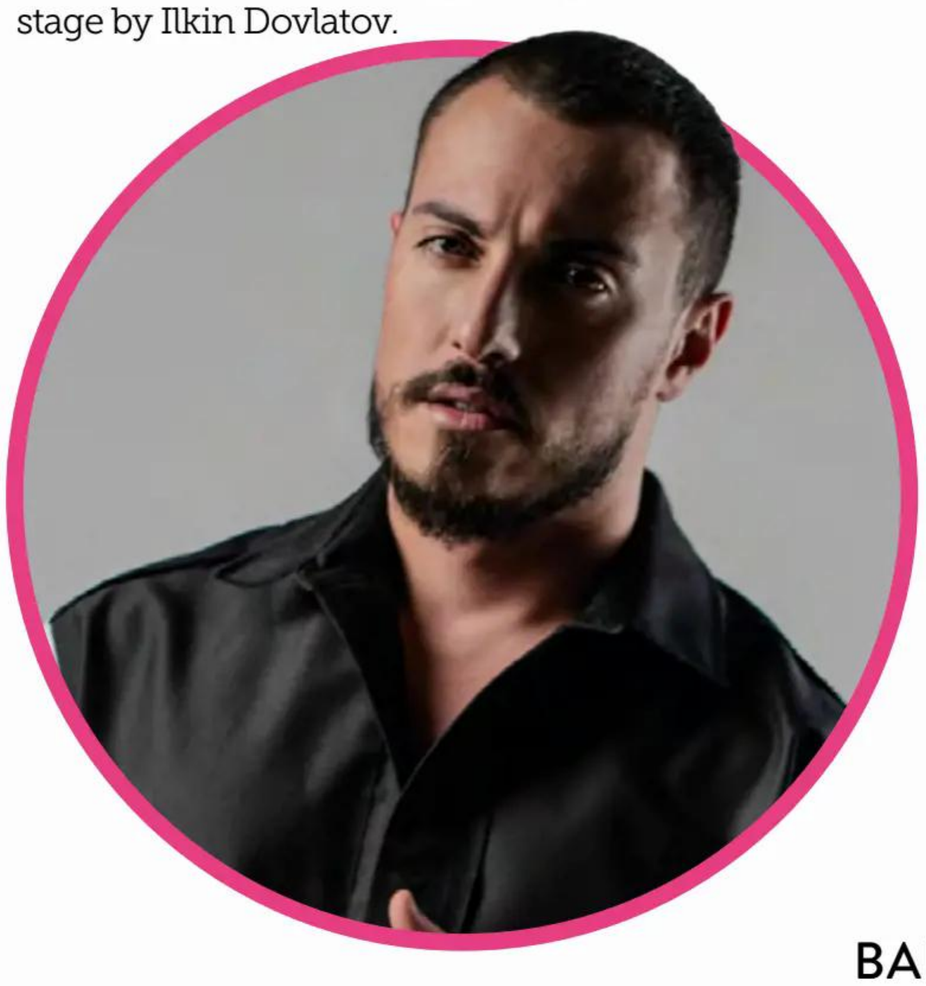
EUROVISION SONG CONTEST
MALMÖ 2024

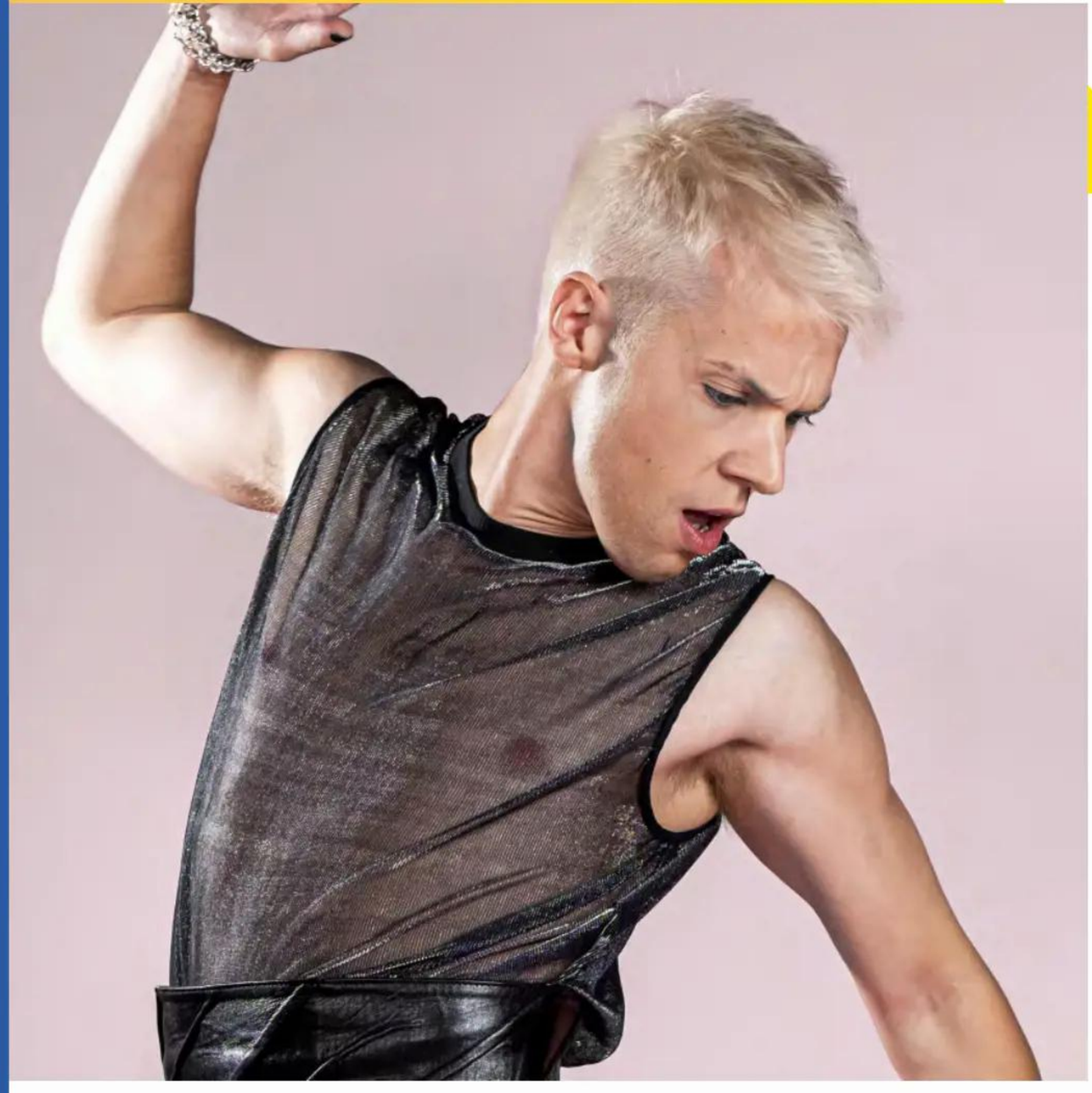
AZERBAIJAN

PERFORMER: FAHREE FT. ILKIN DOVLATOV

SONG: *ÖZÜNLƏ APAR*

Fahree was born in Baku in 1995 and was brought up in a very artistic family; his father was a passionate jazz drummer, while his grandfather was a respected actor. During his university years, FAHREE studied hard to become a lawyer, spending six years on achieving both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in law. However, while the world was caught up in the global pandemic back in 2020, FAHREE was living a renaissance of his childhood dream... dedicating his life to music. The Azerbaijani singer will be joined on stage by Ilkin Dovlatov.





BELGIUM

PERFORMER: MUSTII

SONG: *BEFORE THE PARTY'S OVER*

With two successful albums under his belt, this flamboyant performer is no stranger to Belgian audiences. The author, composer, singer and actor, known for a plethora of roles in theatre, television and Netflix productions, is set for his busiest yet. Not only will he represent Belgium at the Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden, but he'll also return as a permanent judge on 'Drag Race Belgique' (Season 2) and star in Michiel Blanchart's next film 'La nuit se traîne' alongside Romain Duris.

CROATIA

PERFORMER: BABY LASAGNA

SONG: *RIM TIM TAGI DIM*

Baby Lasagna is a project created by singer-songwriter Marko Purišić in order to compose the kind of songs he wanted to release. The Umag musician has a relaxed approach to making music, which is reflected in his humorous and casual lyrics. Using what he sees as the predictable arrangement standards of the music industry, Marko tries, for those who listen carefully, to convey a deeper message about the worries and sufferings of our environment. Baby Lasagna's mission is to entertain you while drawing attention to the social and spiritual challenges of individuals and society.

CYPRUS

PERFORMER: SILIA KAPSIS

SONG: *LIAR*

Silia is a singer of Cypriot and Greek descent, born and raised in Sydney, Australia, who has already made waves across the entertainment industry. Her love for pop flourished and in 2022 she released a debut song, *Who Am I?*, which she had written and composed at the age of 12. The next singles, *No Boys Allowed* and *Disco Dancer*, followed in March and May of 2023. She's also danced with Stephen tWitch Boss on 'The Jennifer Hudson Show' and was featured in a dance documentary produced by Taboo from the Black Eyed Peas.

PHOTOS ADIL YUSIFOV; RTBF; EBU; EBU

CZECHIA

PERFORMER: AIKO

SONG: *PEDESTAL*

Aiko, currently based in Brighton, is a visionary artist who delves into themes such as love, solitude and self-understanding, using her music as a medium for introspection and connection. Her sophomore album, 'Fortune's Child' (2023), is a testament to her growth as an artist and the depth of her musical prowess. Breaking barriers and making history, Aiko proudly stands as the first Czech artist to grace the iconic screens of Times Square. Moreover, she has earned the distinction of being the first Czech female artist to contribute to the global Spotify Equal Campaign, emphasising her commitment to inclusivity and equality within the music industry.

DENMARK

PERFORMER: SABA

SONG: *SAND*

SABA is the first brown, queer woman to sing for Denmark at the Eurovision Song Contest and a strong role model for minorities and the LGBTQ+ community. Open about her own struggles with mental vulnerability and being bipolar, she is an inspiring symbol of hope and perseverance, which she hopes many can relate to. For several years, SABA worked as a model and photographer, but it was in 2023 that she seized the opportunity to focus on music, by taking over the lead role in the musical 'Hair' from her twin sister, Andrea.

FINLAND

PERFORMER: WINDOWS95MAN

SONG: *NO RULES*

Windows95man is a well-known entertainer, dancer and model, widely appreciated in Finland and throughout the world. A sweet and pleasant individual, he is a bit of a shy nerd during the daytime, but when he puts on his uniform - the infamous defunct operating system t-shirt and denim hotpants combo - he transforms into a superman! His DJ sets, consisting of '90s eurodance and techno hits, have been combined with such intense live performances that audiences have regularly been left breathless. The national final performance of No Rules! combined Windows95man's attitude, Henri Piispanen's unbelievable vocals, and a mythical denim egg, which lead the duo to an unexpected but indisputable victory in Finland.

ESTONIA

PERFORMER:

5MIINUST X PUULUUP

SONG: *(NENDEST) NARKOOTIKUMIDEST EI TEA ME (KÜLL) MIDAGI*

The pairing of 5MIINUST x Puuluup is a wildly eclectic collaboration. The former has been a dominating force in pop music in Estonia over the last six years and the latter is an award-winning internationally active zombie-folk (if you were to ask them) duo. Regardless of the perceived differences between genres, the extremes of both acts' music blend together seamlessly. 5MIINUST regard themselves as bringing the firepower to the collaboration, with plenty of bass. Puuluup, meanwhile, contribute some extremely rare wooden lyra (Talharpa) melodies with which to offer to the world a totally fresh soundscape.

PHOTOS EBU; WILLIAM GREEN; KEN MÜRK/ERR; YLE / NELLIKENTTÄ

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST
MALMÖ 2024

FRANCE

PERFORMER: SLIMANE
SONG: *MON AMOUR*

From the piano bars of Paris Pigalle, where he started, to his sold-out arena tours, Slimane's journey is an ode to perseverance, talent and passion. Since winning The Voice (France) in 2016, Slimane's rise in popularity has been meteoric, with two million albums sold, five NRJ Music Awards, two billion worldwide streams, seven million followers on social media and a Victorie de la Musique to his name. The singer wrote the lyrics of Mon amour and co-composed the song with his inseparable partners and friends Yaacov and Meir Salah, with whom Slimane has been making music since the age of 15.

GREECE

PERFORMER:
MARINA SATTI
SONG: *ZARI*

Marina Satti will represent her nation in the 50th anniversary of Greece's first Eurovision Song Contest participation. Over her career, the star has developed a unique sound that combines the different musical traditions she grew up with, such as Greek, Arabic and Balkan. Having represented Greece in the EBU's Euroradio Jazz Orchestra with works by Peter Herbolzheimer; singing at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington with the World Jazz Nonet; and participating in the a cappella vocal group The Singing Tribe in collaboration with Bobby McFerrin, it's safe to say that Marina is an artist who defies categorisation. She released her first full-length album, 'YENNA', in May 2022.

GEORGIA

PERFORMER: NUTSA BUZALADZE
SONG: *FIREFIGHTER*

Nutsa Buzaladze has participated in (and won) many different song contests over her career. Her achievements include a Top 12 finish at 'American Idol' in 2023, where she performed a duet with Kylie Minogue on her classic track *Can't Get You Out Of My Head*. In 2019, Nutsa released her debut album under the name Nutsa22, covering not only Georgian songs but also compositions in English. But it was *Gelodebi* that became her breakout hit, leading her to tour the country with a live band.

GERMANY

PERFORMER: ISAAK
SONG: *ALWAYS ON THE RUN*

ISAAK embarked on his musical journey as a street musician at the age of 12. Fuelled by a deep passion for music, he honed his skills in playing the guitar, piano, ukulele and drums. It was during this formative period that he not only cultivated his unmistakable voice, which has resonated deeply with his audiences, but also developed a captivating stage presence. A devoted family man and husband, music has always been at the heart of ISAAK's life. A big break for the singer arrived in 2021, when he won the talent show 'Show Your Talent'. His early experiences as a street performer have shaped his artistry today, instilling in him a deep connection to both his craft and his audience.

PHOTOS FT; KIKALA STUDIO; VALENTIN AMMON; PEGGY THEODOROGIANNI

ICELAND

PERFORMER: HERA BJÖRK
SONG: *SCARED OF HEIGHTSA*

Hera Björk captured the international spotlight when she represented Iceland at the Eurovision Song Contest 2010 with her hit song *Je Ne Sais Quoi*. But this diva's presence has been felt across the Euro-verse since the 2008 Contest, when she provided backing vocals for Iceland's participant Euroband, before competing in Denmark's Melodi Grand Prix a year later. Her talents have shone brightly in various competitions and events, including her celebrated anthem *Feel The Love Tonight* for LGBTQ+ pride events in 2011, her triumphant victory with *Because We Can* at Viña del Mar festival in 2013, and her emotionally charged rendition of *Moving On* in the Songvakeppnin final in 2019.

ISRAEL

PERFORMER: EDEN GOLAN
SONG: *HURRICANE*

Eden's talents span singing, songwriting, composing, musical production and dancing. Starting at the age of nine years old, she garnered recognition by participating in competitions and winning numerous awards. The young singer was the lead vocalist in a girl group for two years, captivating audiences on various stages, festivals and TV shows, before joining label and publishing house Session42 at the age of 18. Eden's musical style encompasses pop, soul and R&B, drawing inspiration from influential artists such as Beyoncé, Ariana Grande, Jessie J, RAYE, Whitney Houston and Justin Timberlake.

IRELAND

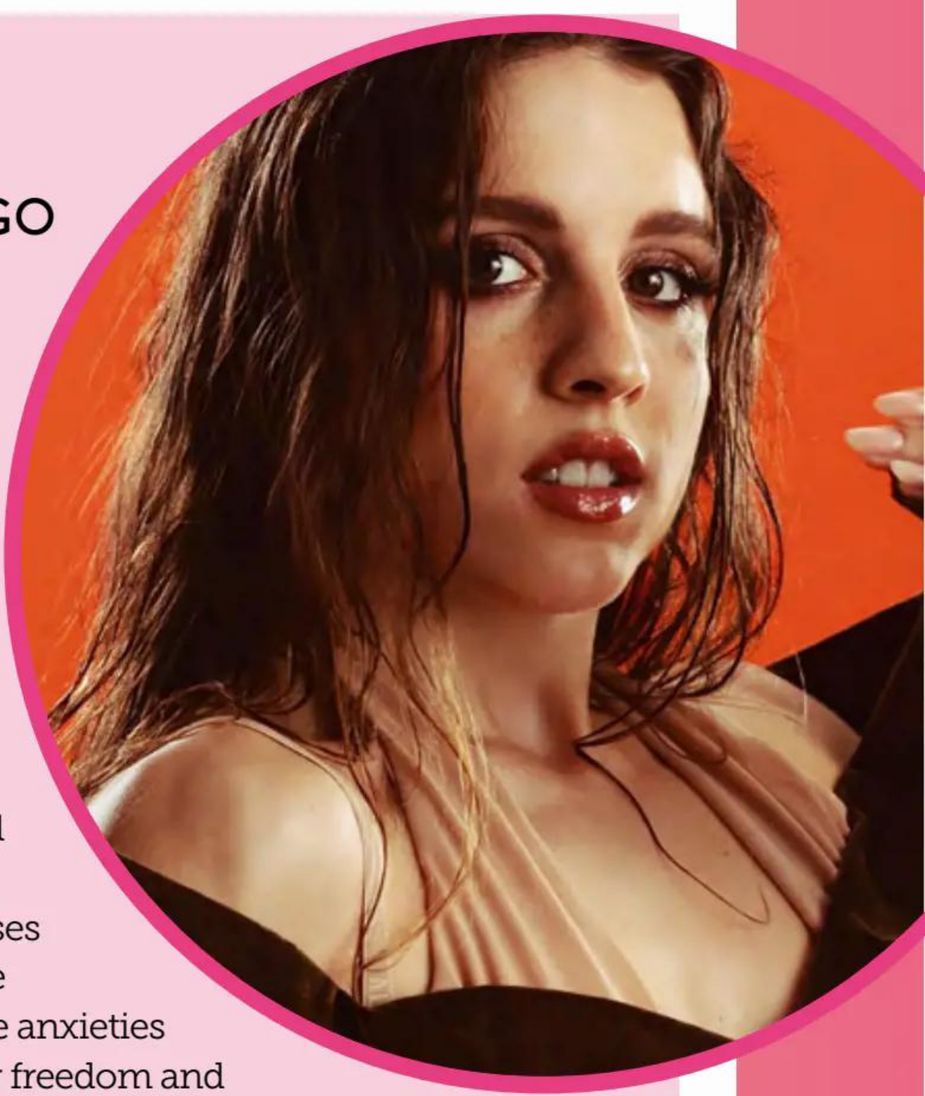
PERFORMER: BAMBIE THUG
SONG: *DOOMSDAY BLUE*

Cork-born alt disruptor Bambie Thug is smashing through gender and socio-political stereotypes to create an era-defining sound that borders on elements of pop, rock, electronic and more. Self-coining the term 'Ouija-pop' to describe their sound, Bambie Thug has made serious waves with a series of genre-defying singles and a critically acclaimed EP CATHEXIS. Doomsday Blue is about the feeling of having your potential overlooked, and is an ode to the queer community. No stranger to the big stage, Bambie has torn up festival stages across the world including Download Festival, The Great Escape and Trans Musicales, to much critical acclaim.

ITALY

PERFORMER:
ANGELINA MANGO
SONG: *LA NOIA*

With 4 platinum records, two gold records, and a completely sold-out tour, Angelina Mango was one of the break-out stars of 2023 in Italy. Her music is a mix that brings together different influences, including Italian and American rap, R&B and instrumental music. In her songs, the singer-songwriter addresses issues and themes that are relevant to her, such as the anxieties of GenZ, love, the need for freedom and the value of family.



PHOTOS EBU; EBU; RAN YEHEZKEL; ANDREA BIANCHERA

LATVIA

PERFORMER: DONS

SONG: *HOLLOW*

Dons is a renowned Latvian pop/rock icon and one of the nation's most-awarded artists of the last decade. The soulful power-ballad Hollow was composed with Irish songwriter and producer Liam Geddes and American songwriter Kate Northrop, and was initially released in Latvian. The singer draws profound inspiration from compelling, soul-stirring melodies, and during the song's creation, all collaborators shared a unanimous sense that they had crafted something truly magical.

MALTA

PERFORMER: SARAH BONNICI

SONG: *LOOP*

Growing up in a highly musical family, Sarah's passion for the arts was discovered at a very young age. In 2009, Sarah made her debut in the Malta Junior Eurosong, finishing third overall. The following year, she joined the Maltese delegation as a backup singer and dancer at Junior Eurovision in Belarus. Throughout the years, Sarah has headlined major festivals and events and has been invited to perform on international stages all across Europe. Sarah co-wrote *Loop* with Eurovision Song Contest 2015 winning writers Linnea Deb and Joy Deb, together with Leire Gotxi Angel, Sebastian Pritchard-James, Kevin-Lee and Michael Joe Cini.

LITHUANIA

PERFORMER: SILVESTER BELT

SONG: *LUKTELK*

Music has been an integral part of Silvester's life since he was a child. His songs are inspired by personal life experiences, particularly drawing upon his memories of exploring his sexuality in a homophobic environment growing up, and how the suppression of those emotions affected him deeply. *Luktelk* (which translates as *wait/hold on*) is about being stuck in limbo between two stages of barely existing and feeling alive, when you have to hold on and dance through whatever life throws at you. Silvester also competed in 'Vaikų Eurovizijos Nacionalinė Atranka' - Lithuania's pre-selection competition for Junior Eurovision in 2010.

LUXEMBOURG

PERFORMER: TALI

SONG: *FIGHTER*

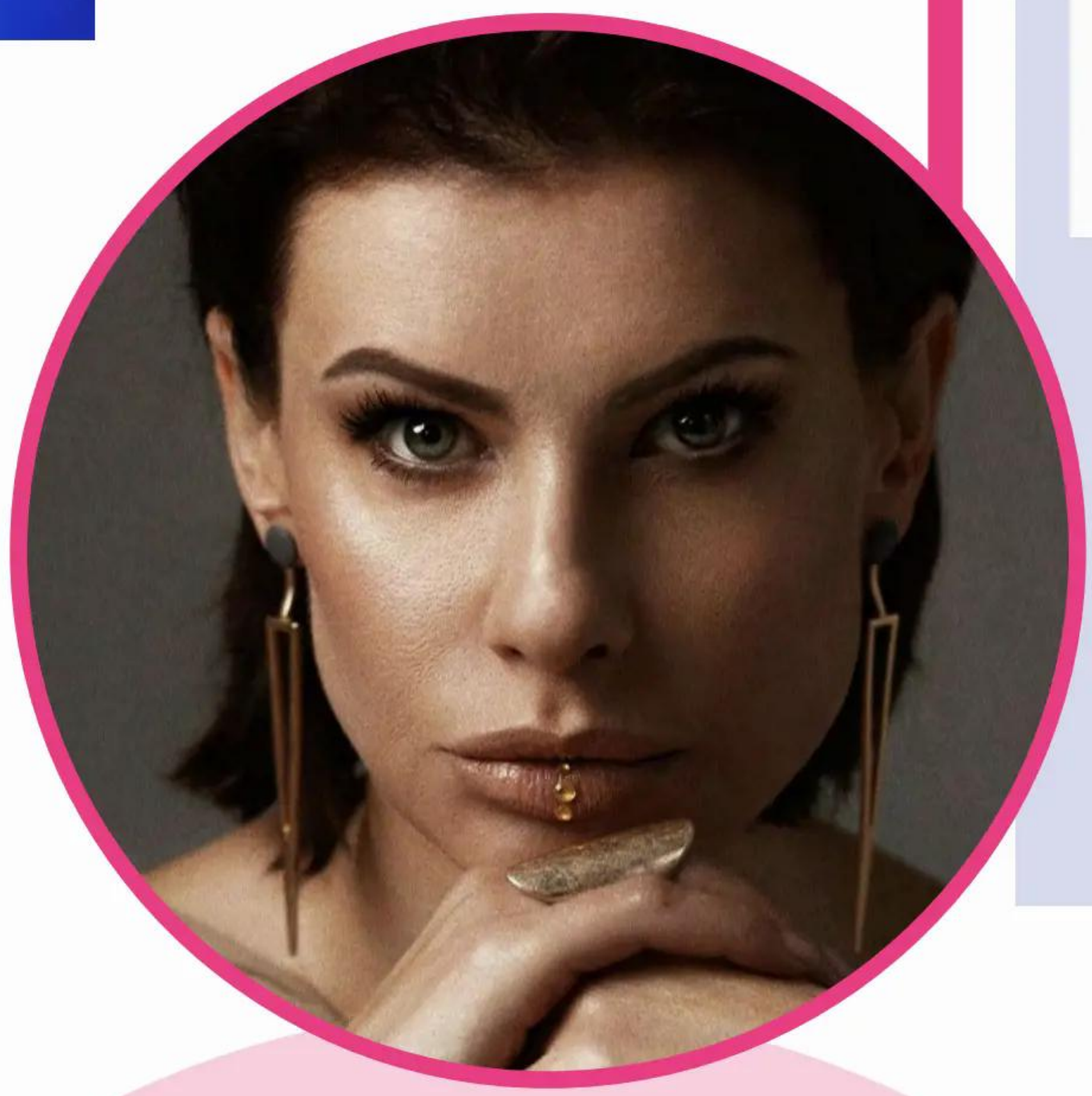
TALI is a performer, vocal coach, music teacher and Luxembourg's first Eurovision Song Contest participant in over 30 years! She has recently been on the road with her music group in New York, where she performed at venues including RockWood Music Hall, Mercury Lounge, Arlene's Grocery and The Delancey. In 2021, she released her debut EP 'Lose You', which she co-wrote with Francis of Delirium. TALI is now working on her debut album with a new band called Blue Stripes. Besides her flourishing pop and songwriting career, she has starred in a short indie film 'Agua', and has also forged a successful career in theatre.

PHOTOS LTV / LAURIS VIKSNE; EBU; EBU; EBU

MOLDOVA

PERFORMER: NATALIA BARBU
SONG: *IN THE MIDDLE*

Natalia Barbu is a violinist, vocalist and composer from the Republic of Moldova. Her rise to fame began in 1998 in the city of Mamaia, where she won a singing competition. Since then, she has released four studio albums and 20 singles. An avid storyteller, Natalia Barbu writes the lyrics for most of her songs herself. No stranger to the Eurovision Song Contest, the songstress also competed for Moldova in Helsinki 2007, where she finished 10th.



THE NETHERLANDS

PERFORMER: JOOST KLEIN
SONG: *EUROPAPA*

Joost Klein is a musician, writer and artist from Britsum, Leeuwarden. His energetic style combines elements from mainstream pop with happy hardcore and pop punk. In the Netherlands, Joost tours regularly with his band and has played festivals like Lowlands and Pinkpop. Last summer, Joost had a No. 1 hit in Germany, Switzerland and Austria with *Friesenjung*. The song has had over 100 million streams worldwide and won Best Song in Germany's 1LIVE Krone radio awards.

NORWAY

PERFORMER: GÅTE
SONG: *ULVEHAM*

Gåte had their breakthrough at the start of the 2000s and quickly went on to become something of a national treasure in Norway. Their unique combination of traditional Norwegian folk music and explosive rock lifted them out of the rehearsal basement and onto some of the world's biggest stages. During this period, Gåte sold more than 100,000 albums, went straight to the top of the VG-lista chart and won the Spellemann Award 2002 for Best Newcomer. The critically acclaimed band took a 12-year break before making a long-awaited return in 2017. Since then, Gåte has delivered concerts and new music to some fantastic reception and widespread acclaim.

POLAND

PERFORMER: LUNA
SONG: *THE TOWER*

An accomplished singer, LUNA has been involved in the music industry since her youth, singing and dancing in a folk band, as well as performing in musical theatre and the Grand Theatre-National Opera in Warsaw. She can play the violin and the piano, is a songwriter (in both English and Polish) and a composer, and she is also a yoga teacher. Art, philosophy and fashion are LUNA's playground, but she's also fascinated with astrology; LUNA cares for Mother Earth and draws as much kind energy from the Moon as possible.

PHOTOS EBU; RUUD JANSSEN; DOROTA SZULC; EBU

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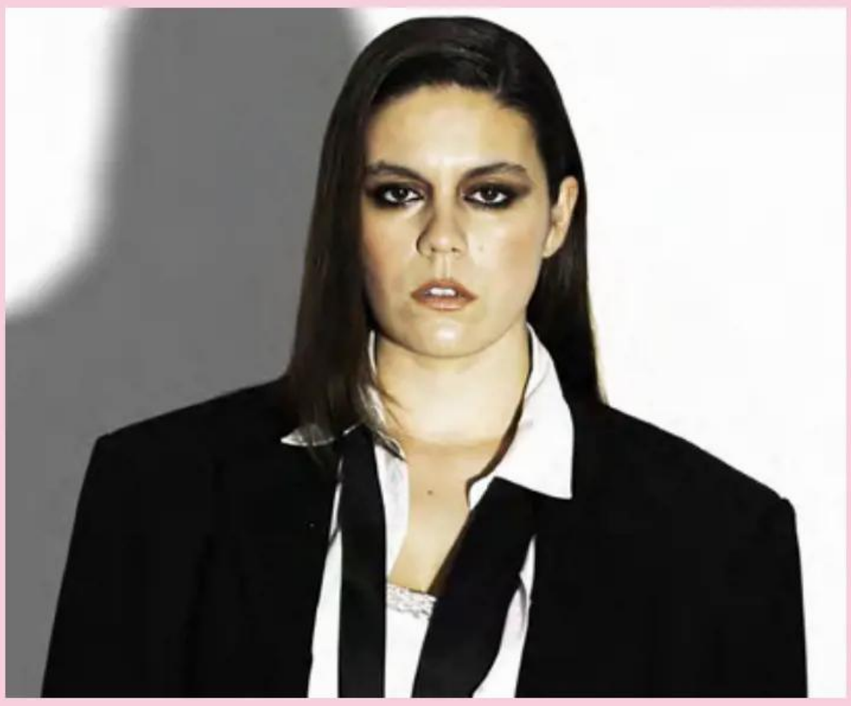
PORTUGAL

PERFORMER: IOLANDA

SONG: *GRITO*

Born in São Pedro de Cova Gala, in Figueira da Foz, iolanda moved to Lisbon at the age of 17, but already at 14 she took her first steps in writing. Not long afterwards, she started performing in bars and national talent competitions as an even greater gateway into music. Later, she moved to the UK, where she studied Songwriting at BIMM, University of Sussex. In iolanda's music, we hear pop and R&B, without the artist ever compromising on her traditional Portuguese and Iberian roots.



SAN MARINO

PERFORMER: MEGARA

SONG: *11:11*

More than a band, MEGARA is a concept!

Rock, pop, metal, electronic - whatever! These guys play with all kinds of musical genres, forgetting about prejudices and labels. The band embraces inclusivity, and within their act there is space for spikes, headbanging and fire, but also for dancers, unicorns and candy. There's room for everybody! They released their very first EP 'Muérase Qué Puede' in 2015, and one year later they put out their debut album Siete. Since then, three more albums have followed, with Truco o Trato being the most recent one in late 2022.

SERBIA

PERFORMER: TEYA DORA

SONG: *RAMONDA*

By blending modern pop with traditional Balkan influences and heartfelt lyrics, TEYA's music has resonated with millions globally. She has recently been the artist with the most monthly listeners on Spotify in the Balkans (peaking at over three million) and also had the most-streamed song in the region with her previous hit Džanum. Despite personal challenges, including the loss of her father, TEYA's music remains an expression of hope and resilience. Her Eurovision hero is Marija Šerifović, who won the Eurovision Song Contest for Serbia in 2007.

SLOVENIA

PERFORMER: RAIVEN

SONG: *VERONIKA*

Described as a 'musical alchemist', Raiven thrives as a mezzo-soprano singer, author, songwriter and harpist. Her electro-pop debut arrived in 2014, but her musical evolution came to the forefront during Slovenia's national selection shows, 'EMA'. There, Raiven has participated with several songs over the years, including Črno Bel, *Zažarim* and *KAOS*. In 2021, Raiven won at the renowned Slovenian music festival Popevka, with her song *Volkovi*. In between all that, she has been active in both opera and theatre, and after obtaining a Master's degree from the Ljubljana Academy of Music, the singer started to explore the electro-opera sphere.

PHOTOS EBU; EBU; IVAN MILOVANOVIĆ; EBU

SPAIN

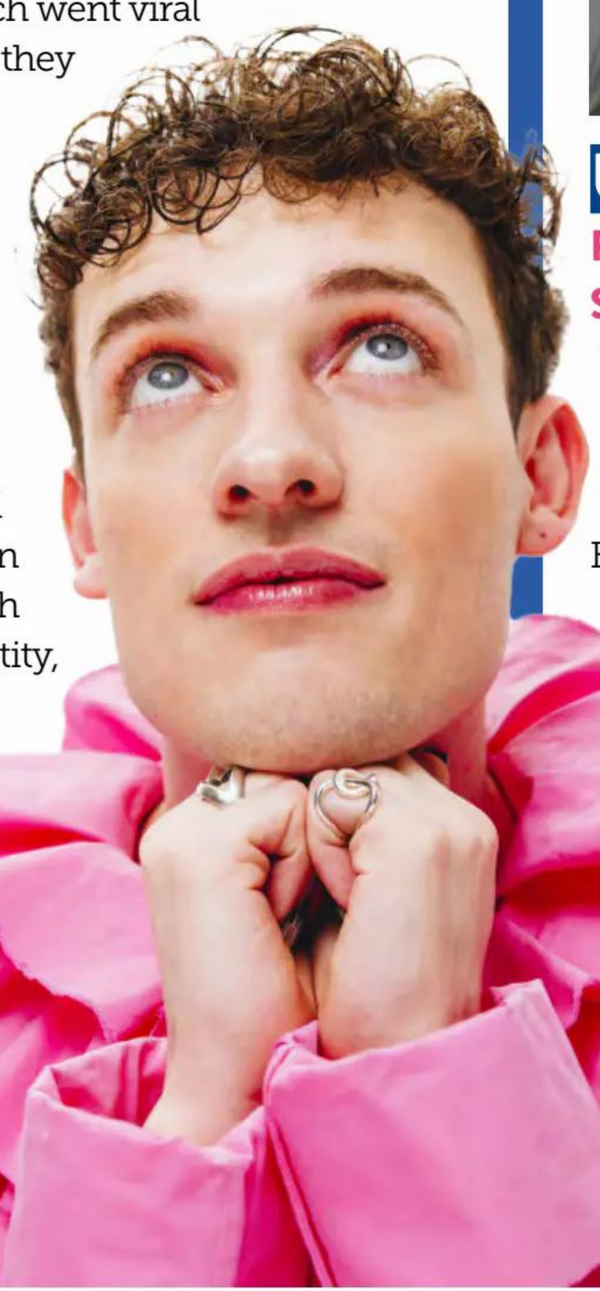
PERFORMER: NEBULOSSA
SONG: *ZORRA*

This synth-pop duo from Alicante features Mery Bas providing vocals and Mark Dasousa on synths. The band won Spain's pre-selection show 'Benidorm Fest' with ZORRA, which stayed in the upper echelons of the Spanish charts for weeks on end, also becoming the second-most viral hit on streaming platforms globally during February. The lyrics are autobiographical and were conceived as self-therapy by Mery, who needed to express herself to shake all the feelings of discrimination she has felt for being a free-spirited woman. She decided to embark on a musical career after turning 50, and the artist wants to encourage people to break free from society's labels and to celebrate their identities and liberty.

SWITZERLAND

PERFORMER: NEMO
SONG: *THE CODE*

Born in 1999 in Biel, a small bilingual town in Switzerland, Nemo has been playing the violin, piano and drums since they were a small child. In 2016, Nemo became famous overnight through an appearance at SRF Virus (#Cypher), which went viral on social media. Afterwards they released two EPs - through which seven songs made it directly onto the official Swiss Singles Chart. 2020 marked the beginning of a period of change for Nemo, when they started writing and producing for other artists, and also started releasing songs in English. In their music, Nemo deals with themes such as gender identity, mental health and finding one's place in this world.



SWEDEN

PERFORMER: MARCUS & MARTINUS
SONG: *UNFORGETTABLE*

Twins Marcus & Martinus rose to fame as one of Scandinavia's biggest pop sensations after winning Norway's 'Junior MGP' in 2012. At the age of nine, their song *To Dråper Vann* hit the Top 10 in Norway and was swiftly followed by their biggest hit to date, Elektrisk, which stayed on the charts for 66 consecutive weeks. With over 1.5 billion streams, the duo has gained a massive following and sold out arenas across Scandinavia and topped the charts in their home country, as well as in Sweden and Finland, with multiple hit singles.

UKRAINE

PERFORMER: ALYONA ALYONA & JERRY HEIL
SONG: *TERESA & MARIA*

Ukraine's song for 2024 is a collaboration between two of the country's most successful artists. Alyona Alyona is the most popular female rapper in Ukraine and a co-founder of the local major label that Eurovision Song Contest 2022 winners Kalush Orchestra are signed with. And, in just four years after starting her video blog, Jerry Heil has become an incredibly popular artist with her videos receiving tens of millions of views. *Teresa & Maria* was written to remind people that everyone is capable of achieving great heights, and that 'all the divas were born as human beings'; emphasising that we all start small and that it is our actions that define us.

PHOTOS EBU; JONATHAN PERLEMANN; SRF / ELLA METTLER; EBU

RETROPOP's Eurovision predictions

It's another strong year at Eurovision but only one song can win - here's who we've got our eye on ahead of the Grand Final

1 BABY LASAGNA - *RIM TIM TAGI DIM*

A fusion of techno, metal and trap - with a pop thread running throughout - *Rim Tim Tagi Dim* is Eurovision through and through, so it's hardly surprising it's a frontrunner. The song was composed solely by Croatia's Baby Lasagna, who originally intended it to be a filler on his debut album, 'Demons And Mosquitoes', before realising its potential and entering it into the running!

2 NEMO - *THE CODE*

Since Nemo's *The Code* was announced as Norway's Eurovision entry it's been a favourite among fans - and it's not hard to see why. The high energy track deals with the singer's non-binary identity, with rapped verses and a soaring chorus that brings home the journey they've been on. With a distinctive style sure to translate into their live performance, Nemo looks to be set for a strong night.

3 ANGELINA MANGO - *LA NOIA*

Italy's Angelina Mango has already made waves across europe with *La noia*, shifting over 100,000 copies in Italy and entering the charts in Switzerland, San Marino and Croatia, placing her as a frontrunner heading into Eurovision season. Inspired by the Cumbia rhythms and folk dance traditions of Latin America, it's a sound all of its own in this year's line-up, and having proven herself a capable performer she's sure to do well

4 MUSTII - *BEFORE THE PARTY'S OVER*

A poor result last year sent Belgium back to the drawing board and Mustii's *Before The Party's Over* is a great comeback. The track is "pop with a dark edge", with the moment a showcase of his authenticity and flamboyance. The song also features a chorus made from recordings of fan submissions, which is sure to land him a few extra votes.

5 OLLY ALEXANDER - *DIZZY*

Last year wasn't a good year for the United Kingdom but that could all change thanks to Olly Alexander's *Dizzy*. The perfect Eurovision sound and a performer who's known across the continent, a strong performance could send it up into the higher regions of the scoreboard. With more than a decade of performing with Years & Years under his belt, we have high hopes for the UK in Malmö.

6 JOOST KLEIN - *EUROPAPA*

Perhaps this year's most bonkers entry, Joost Klein is sure to get tongues wagging with *Europapa*. But like all the best outrageous Eurovision entries, it's also incredibly infectious and totally catchy, tapping into the sounds of 2 Unlimited and Vengaboys. It's already been No. 1 on the singles charts in the Netherlands and is sure to pick up fans from across the continent along the way.

7 WINDOWS95MAN - *NO RULES!*

Performed by Finnish visual artist Teemu Keisteri, known as Windows95man, *No Rules!* is inspired by Keisteri's life mantra of not taking everything seriously. Last year, the country scored a massive success with Käärijä's *Cha Cha Cha* and although we can't see *No Rules!* bettering that second-place finish, their latest playful track is actually pretty cool too!

8 ALYONA ALYONA & JERRY HEIL - *TERESA & MARIA*

Teresa & Maria is tipped to do well for Ukraine and it's easy to see why. A song about hope, inspired by Roman Catholic saint Mother Teresa and the Virgin Mary, and with a superb delivery by the vocalists, it's sure to be a poignant moment. Whether it does as well as some projections is to be seen, but it'll undoubtedly be a good night for Ukraine.

9 KALEEN - *WE WILL RAVE*

A techno-inspired pop banger that's sure to find its way onto many Eurovision playlists after Kaleen's performance in Malmö, *We Will Rave* is Eurovision through and through and one of the most instant and commercial entries in this year's line-up. In such a diverse array of entries, it might not stand out as much as others, but we're confident Austria will be in for a good night with this one.

10 MARCUS & MARTINUS - *UNFORGETTABLE*

Representing host country Sweden, Marcus & Martinus deliver the country's trademark pop with this year's entry *Unforgettable*. On the back of Loreen's win last year, it's back to basics with a crowd-pleasing tune sure to get the arena on their feet and liven up viewing parties across Europe. It doesn't have 'winner' written across it, but *Unforgettable* is nonetheless a good pop tune that's sure to bag points on the night.

GRAND FINAL

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I always felt that I've been mislabeled because I've never thought I was worthy of the soul label

HEART & SOUL

One of the most successful artists in UK music, **Gabrielle** follows up her 30th anniversary celebrations with her stunning new album, 'A Place In Your Heart', and insists there's plenty more still to come!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

In 1993, British singer-songwriter Gabrielle rocketed to the top of the UK charts with her debut single *Dreams*, launching a career spanning three decades and counting.

Over the years, the Hackney-born star has risen to become one of the country's most-successful pop acts, earning eight UK Top 20 albums, 13 Top 20 singles and multiple BRIT, Ivor Novello and MOBO Awards along the way.

Now, she returns with her brand new LP 'A Place In Your Heart' - a 12-song set that showcases her impeccable songwriting and distinctive vocals, resulting in a body of work that stands out among the best of the singer-songwriter's 30+ year career.

FEEL

"Somebody told me the other day that this is my 10th album - I didn't even know," laughs Gabrielle of her latest LP, which follows seven studio sets and two compilations. The 12-song collection serves as the follow-up to her 2021 covers collection 'Do It Again' - which arrived on the back of her appearance on 'The Masked Singer UK' and peaked at No. 4 in the UK, her first Top 5 placement in over 20 years - and is her first original body of work since 2018 LP 'Under My Skin'.

Work on the project began three years ago when she wrote *Stop Right Now* and *Can't Hurry Love* as the two new tracks on her previous release. "I'd been writing and there were a lot of songs to choose from for that album, so the fact that I'd been continuously writing meant that by the time we got in the studio, I had so much material," she admits. The record reunites the chart-topper with producer Ian Barter, whose repertoire includes tracks for Amy Winehouse and Paloma Faith, and who has been working with Gabrielle for the past five years.

"He is incredible - as a producer and as a person," she beams. "I used to go in with producers and they had this concept of what they thought Gabrielle was about. I don't play music but I write my own songs and I know if you're playing me a piece of music I love, I'm jumping on it because it speaks to me. I've had producers who would skip over pieces of music that they didn't think were appropriate for me, but Ian gives it all to me. Whether it's indie or rock or whatever, he gives me a plethora of music."

With over half a decade of working together under their belts, the pair have a rhythm in the studio. "The routine is, as soon as I go into that vocal booth he has to start recording me straightaway, because if there's a vibe and I start singing, do not expect me to remember it. It's usually a momentary thing so if you haven't captured it, that's on you," she reflects. "I just start freestyling and that's how it works. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. And I don't want to fix it because when I go to work with him, it's not like work. It's just playtime."

When she hit the road last autumn for her '30 Years Of Dreaming' tour, Gabrielle debuted material from the new album, including the title song and lead single, live. It's something she's never done before: "I just felt like I was so ready to showcase these songs and I wanted to do three or four of them, but I had to whittle it down because my manager was like: 'People don't do that when they haven't released the album yet!' That's how stoked I am about this new music, though, and the audience reception has been amazing."

Conceived over the past few years, Gabrielle wasn't short of inspiration for the record, although one subject matter was off the table altogether. "Covid was definitely *not* blimmin' on there," she insists. "Why would you want to write about something that was so bloody depressing?"

She elaborates: "I'm notorious for writing songs about my life and there's a few songs on my albums over the years that I've written about friends. On 'Under My Skin' I've got a song called *Every Step* that I wrote about my mate and their terrible relationship/marriage. It was like, 'You know what, you married that person - you can either stick with it and shut the fuck up or get out!' You know, I'm a writer and if I haven't got something deep inside of me, because everything's going alright or whatever, then I will look to the close friend

"I hope that, if nothing else, I'm an inspiration for being your true authentic self"

who has told me something and go, 'Oh, that would make a good song', and that's what happens.

"This album is the story of my life and I write about me, but if you're close to me and there are things going on in your life then I'm probably going to write a song about you too - so don't tell me anything," she jokes. Gabrielle does, however, always tell her friends when they're the subject of one of her tracks, but that hasn't always stopped others from mistaking themselves for her muse.

"When I wrote *Out Of Reach*, someone in my life at the time was like: 'Did you write that about me?' Fucking cheek," she chuckles . "I was like, 'No, that song isn't about you, it's about the movie ['Bridget Jones's Diary'] and the characters! How dare you hijack my song!' I'm not saying his name and we are lifelong friends now. God, he's going to be so embarrassed when this interview comes out..."

RAINBOW

Not only one of the most recognisable voices in British music, Gabrielle is also the writer behind her biggest hits, such as *Dreams*, *Give Me A Little More Time*, *Sunshine* and *Rise*, a process she says is often incredibly fast. "I remember *Out Of Reach* was really quick back in the day. If I've got a melody then it's instant, it's as good as written," she smiles. "Sometimes it's weird because people will say, 'How do we know that piece of the song is gonna ▶

"If you're close to me and there are things going on in your life then I'm probably going to write a song about you"

go up there? It's like you're preempting it...' And I don't know; maybe it's something musicians do and I just happen to be lucky like that. I just do my thing and if it works, it works. And when it doesn't, it doesn't. It doesn't matter because we just move on. It's all about the energy and the feeling."

Case in point: *Dreams*. Co-written with Tim Laws and produced by Richie Fermie, they had asked her to go away and write new lyrics over a sample of Tracy Chapman's *Fast Car*. "I was meant to have written the song but... I hadn't," she remembers. "So I literally went in my book of poems, picked out *Dreams* and blagged it. The poem wasn't very long but I just went in and *Dreams* as we know it was born. All because I couldn't be bothered - but maybe that's how it's meant to be. I didn't know how my life would turn out, but sometimes I think trying to be too methodical can go against the whole nature of how things are meant to be. The universe made me be a lazy cow in that aspect and here I am 31 years later still talking about it!"

When she started out back in 1993, Gabrielle's sound was worlds away from the majority of the pop charts at the time. It was an intentional move, she says, to not follow trends. "I didn't know how to do or be anything else. I could only be myself," she shrugs. "When I look back, I was still bigger than a lot of the girls back in those days, so they were showing skin - which, fair play to them, if you've got the body then why not show it - and I didn't, so I just did my thing and was true to myself. And I was really lucky because I had a record company who weren't asking me to be anything other than me."

To this day, she insists there are "more pressures on females than males" in the industry, but Gabrielle hopes that in embracing her authenticity she inspired future generations to not feel obliged or pressured to conform. "You have to do what works for you," she maintains. "I wore the eyepatch because of having a lazy eyelid, but I'm thankful if it inspired other people to say, 'You know what, Gabrielle's got a lazy eyelid but it didn't stop her from making music and having success'. Obviously, some people were like, 'Who does she think she is?', but if someone who's not the normal look for TV comes on the screen then you have no choice but to check them out. Over the years, people have said that's inspired them and I hope that, if nothing else, I'm an inspiration for being your true authentic self."

Of course, Gabrielle's three decades in music have inspired generations of talent, including singer-songwriter Mahalia, who features on the new track *Good Enough*. "She is phenomenal. She's incredible and she's a sweetie," beams the star. "I got to meet her for the first time when I did BST and opened up for Adele [in Hyde Park, London] and it was amazing. She's got the most amazing vocals and I rarely do duets, but when I did *Good Enough* it was like if you're gonna ▶

> **"I used to go in with producers and they had this concept of what they thought Gabrielle was about"**

do something with someone [it's got to be her]. As a young British female, it just made sense. She's wicked."

How does she feel that so many artists, like Mahalia and Adele (who hand selected the support line-up for her BST performance in 2022), cite her as an influence? "I feel blessed. I sometimes think to myself, 'I can't believe I inspired this person'. When people credit me as someone they listened to as they were growing up, I'm like, 'Wow'. It's a nice feeling and it's still something that I find hard to believe. If by me doing my thing, which I felt was very simple, inspired these mega superstars then I'll take that. Even though I've got no right to take it, because they were always going to be big, huge stars in their own right!"

CONQUER

Throughout her career, Gabrielle has been labelled as a soul singer, but off stage she's a self-declared "'80s pop tart", citing Haircut 100, Adam And The Ants, Culture Club, Madonna, and Janet and Michael Jackson among her favourites from the era. At home, her mum was heavily into Motown, soul and reggae, which laid the foundations for her musical palette, but she's reluctant to put herself into any one box.

"In interviews, they always talk about 'Gabrielle the soul girl' and I used to be offended because the true soul girls have those soulful voices. I sang a couple of soulful songs, but most of my big songs - like *Out Of Reach*, *Sunshine*, *Dreams* - are not soul, they're pop. Even *A Place In Your Heart* is pop. So I always felt that I've been mislabeled because I've never thought I was worthy of the soul label.

"Now, when people come to my shows, I like to feel that I give a different assortment of music - and that's me! You don't just come and feel you're watching one type of show. It's just the Gabrielle show."

Next year, she's playing arenas as part of her latest tour, with dates across the UK, which follows a run of summer shows including a number of prides. "When I go out on the stage, they're my family, man. I frickin' love it," she beams of playing LGBTQ+ events. "I love it every time. That's the ultimate, just being able to be yourself, and that's what I love about the whole community. You don't have to worry - just fucking enjoy it!"

Included is a set at Brighton Pride, where she'll support Sunday headliner Mika. It's not her first time at the event, she recalls: "I remember I did the one where Britney had performed the day before and there was the catwalk - I was like, 'Wow!' They were like, 'You're not supposed to go down there', and I was like, 'Hell, I'm going down there anyway - I wanna be walking where Britney bitch was walking!' It was amazing. I love Britney!"

PHOTOS UZO OLEH

> **Sometimes I think trying to be too methodical can go against the whole nature of how things are meant to be**

Talking not long after her BBC Radio 2 Piano Room set, during which she delivered a stunning rendition of Lionel Richie's *Stuck On You*, along with her most recent single and *Out Of Reach*, the orchestral sound couldn't be more fitting for Gabrielle's voice. But it was, she insists, a daunting prospect. "We did *Walk On By* with an orchestra and it was beautiful, but if you knew how shit scared I was going in with them - I was in awe," she confesses. "I was a wreck, because I was too scared of doing it wrong. When I go wrong with my band, they just go round again, but when it's people that aren't used to working with me like an orchestra, I be shitting myself! Don't get me wrong, that Piano Room was bloody amazing, but when it comes to going on the road, just give me my band. They're used to my nonsense!"

When it comes to the future, Gabrielle has plenty to look forward to. She's just at the start of the new album cycle, which plays out into 2025 with her upcoming shows, which are her focus for the time being. She'd love to work with Adele or James Arthur, she says, "but I'm a scaredy cat - I just admire people from afar because I love them!"

With over 30 years of success to her name, the performer is comfortable with where she's at in her life and career, and reflecting on her many milestones she jokes: "It's something to brag to the grandchildren about later. When I've lost all credibility I can just hang on to my past!

"Right now, my kids are rude; they're like, 'Mum, you love the sound of your own voice', and I'm like, 'Yeah, so do others!' I'm only joking, I've never been a bragger, but now I've got my little grandson who's just turning one, I'm like, 'OK, how long do I have to wait...' Give it another 20 years and I'll be like, 'I might be an old biddy to you, darling, but I was once something!'"

That's way off in the distance, though, and Gabrielle, who turns 55 this summer, has no plans to slow down anytime soon. "I still want to be touring [in 20 years]," she grins. "I wouldn't mind doing this for the length of time Elton John and the Rolling Stones have been doing it, you know? When I'm flipping nearly 80! But I've got my arena tour next year, which I'm super excited about, because I would never have dreamed that I'd be doing that after all these years. So right now, I'm checking myself. That's another one off my bucket list!" **RP**

> **I wouldn't mind doing this for the length of time Elton John and the Rolling Stones have been doing it**

● ***'A Place In Your Heart' is out May 10 on Tag8/ BMG. Tickets for Gabrielle's 2025 UK tour are on sale now.***

GET TO KNOW Damita Jo

In 2004, **Janet Jackson** was riding high on an unstoppable run of hits when she released her eighth LP, 'Damita Jo' - a polarising record at the time that's gone on to become a cult classic 20 years later!

WORDS FABIO MAGNOCAVALLO

At the turn of the millennium, Janet Jackson's career was at an all-time high.

After renewing her contract with Virgin Records for a record-breaking $80 million and completing her 125-date world tour for 'The Velvet Rope' in the late '90s, Miss Jackson entered the next decade with a bang.

Her seventh studio album, 'All for You', released in 2001, would cement her status as the Empress Of Pop, achieving the biggest first-week sales of her career, while the album's lead single and title track became the first song to be added to every pop, urban and rhythmic radio format during release week.

In 2004, her eighth studio LP, the sultry 'Damita Jo', would leave a long-lasting impression on her legacy, but not all for reasons expected...

A LITTLE WHILE

Since 1986's 'Control', Jackson had been known to create her music exclusively with the songwriting and production duo Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. After nearly 20 years of hits together, she felt it was time to branch out and experiment with new producers, although still maintaining her partnership with Jam and Lewis on a number of tracks.

Once she completed her 'All For You' tour in 2002, Jam stated that Jackson was "itching to get back in the studio" and had hoped to release a new album in early 2003. Despite the recording process beginning in August 2002, the record wasn't completed until February 2004, a month before its release.

In addition to Jam and Lewis, Jackson turned to the likes of Babyface, Télépopmusik, Kanye West and Dallas Austin to help bring her vision to life. With so much anticipation for where Jackson would take her sound next, Jam gave fans a little insight into the early studio sessions in a 2003

interview for MTV. "There is no distinct musical style yet. It's all over the place, from songs that I would call classic Janet songs, meaning that they could've been on any of her [earlier] albums. Some of the songs have a definite sort of ambient quality to them," he revealed. At the time, Jackson had been listening to albums from Zero 7 and Télépopmusik for inspiration.

Talking about the making of 'Damita Jo' during the bonus footage of her 'From janet. To Damita Jo: The Videos' DVD, Jackson admitted this was the longest she had ever spent perfecting an album. "There was a lot of stopping and starting," she said. "It took about 18 months. It took quite a while. In the past, the longest had been six months. 'Control' took two and a half months to do. 'Rhythm Nation' took three." When she set out to write 'Damita Jo,' Jackson knew she wanted to make an album that was a departure from what listeners had known her for. In fact, the album title, named after her middle name, was almost what Jackson was going to release the music under. However, after a conversation with Dallas Austin, he convinced her that 'Damita Jo' should instead be the name of the record. "Damita Jo is definitely who I am today in all her schizophrenic personalities," Jackson stated.

The 22-track album was intended to feature multiple collaborations. British electronic acts Basement Jaxx and Richard X were announced but never made the cut. Jackson was also supposed to record with Daniel Bedingfield, Mario Winans and Diddy, as well as write a duet with Justin Timberlake that all never came to life. She did, on the other hand, have studio sessions with producers Dre & Vidal and 7 Aurelius, with the former teasing that he and Jackson had made "cutting edge, hard-hitting dance music" for the album. None of these songs would make the final product. The only collaboration on 'Damita Jo' was My Baby with Kanye West, who she referred to as "absolutely wonderful."

During the lead-up to 'Damita Jo', Janet performed at the Super Bowl XXXVIII halftime show on February 1, 2004, alongside Justin Timberlake. With 150 million people watching at home, this was deemed huge promo for a new era. However, what was supposed to be a big moment for Jackson suddenly turned into a global media frenzy. Often referred to as 'Nipplegate', her right breast was exposed by Timberlake after he ripped off a piece of her garment at the end of their performance. While numerous commentators labelled the incident as a publicity stunt, many insisted it was just a wardrobe malfunction. "Justin was supposed to pull away the rubber bustier to reveal a red lace bra. The garment collapsed and her breast was accidentally revealed," Jackson's representative explained.

Jackson denied claims that it was a stunt and was forced by CBS to make a public video apology. "The decision to have a costume reveal at the end of my halftime show performance was made after final rehearsals. MTV was completely unaware of it. It was not my intention that it go as far as it did. MTV, CBS [and] the NFL had no knowledge of this whatsoever and, unfortunately, the whole thing went wrong in the end. I apologise to anyone offended, including the audience, MTV, CBS and the NFL," she said. Talking to USA Today about the controversy, Jackson felt humiliated that tens of millions of people saw her breast exposed to the world. In spite of the negativity, she remained upbeat, stating: "I feel very positive that things are going to work out just fine. Everything happens for a reason."

MAGIC HOUR

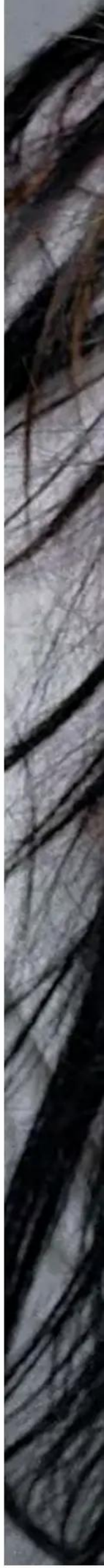
It would be an understatement to say that Jackson's career took an immediate hit following the Super Bowl event. CBS' parent company, Viacom, blacklisted Jackson's music on many radio formats and music channels worldwide, including MTV, after they were fined $550,000 and censored by the FCC. At the Grammy Awards, which took place the following week, Jackson was supposed to present an award, but was uninvited. The same could not be said for Timberlake. Not to mention, the lead single for 'Damita Jo', *Just A Little While*, had already leaked, which resulted in Virgin reacting fast. Rushing a music video and promotion, *Just A Little While* dropped a day following the Super Bowl performance. It's been said that *My Baby*, *All Nite (Don't Stop)* and *R&B Junkie* were previous contenders as the lead single.

The new wave, guitar-infused pop song reflected her newfound happiness during the album's creative process and was supposed to serve as the first taste of the positive vibrations 'Damita Jo' had to offer. Sadly, the backlash from 'Nipplegate' heavily impacted and distracted Jackson from having her moment. Unlike her previous lead singles, *Just A Little While* didn't set the world alight, peaking at No. 48 on the Billboard Hot 100 – her lowest charting commercial single since 1983.

The song did better in Australia and the UK, however, by entering the Top 20. Its Dave Meyers-directed music video matched the playful, fun energy the song exudes; seemingly predicting vlogging culture years prior, Jackson can be seen making home videos of herself and sending them to her boyfriend in Tokyo for him to watch on a DVD player while they're apart.

Weeks later, the R&B love song *I Want You* was released as the album's second single and was sent to urban contemporary radio stations. Jackson received the track from West, who is credited as a songwriter and producer. John Legend also has a writing credit on the song. During the early stages, *I Want You* was originally titled *Have Your Way With Me*, the lyrics she sings during the bridge. Talking about the single, Jackson stated it was "a different kind of song for me, it's more of like a throwback. More of a doowoop-y [feel], which I've never done before which is quite exciting, and I enjoyed recording it in the studio."

Due to the ongoing blacklist from major radio formats, *I Want You* only peaked at No. 57 on the Hot 100, but still went platinum after shifting over one million copies and was nominated for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance at the 47th Annual Grammy Awards. Meyers also directed the video, where Jackson travels through Los Angeles in scenes made to look like Brooklyn, New York. In the end, she meets her then-partner Jermaine Dupri and shares a kiss with him.



PHOTOS MAX VADUKUL / ANDREW MACPHERSON

At the time of filming, Jackson and Dupri's relationship wasn't confirmed. She revealed she was hesitant to feature him in the video but agreed to the idea after Meyers insisted to Jackson: "If I could get the two of you in a simple video together, it's gonna be gold."

Following the first two singles, 'Damita Jo' hit shelves on March 22, 2004, and was predicted to shift around 200,000 copies within its first week of release in the US. Debuting at No. 2, behind Usher's 'Confessions', the album sold 381,000 in the first seven days. Although its sales exceeded expectations, 'Damita Jo' became Jackson's first album not to reach the No. 1 spot on the US Billboard 200 since 1984's 'Dream Street'. Commercially, the album fared well, selling over one million copies and receiving a platinum certification after two months of sales. Although the LP has reportedly sold between two to three million units worldwide, it was considered a commercial disappointment by the media when compared with her previous efforts.

Talking about its performance on the chart at the time, Jackson said: "Of course, everyone wants to sell records and be No. 1. And I think that's important. But for a lot of artists today, it's all about the money as opposed to the art. What happened to artists creating this wonderful body of music that touches people and changes their lives?"

ALL NITE

'Damita Jo', arguably, is one of Jackson's most experimental and diverse albums to date as well as her most confident. With a variety of sonics from pop (*Just A Little While*), R&B (*Thinkin' Bout My Ex*), hip-hop (*Like You Don't Love Me*), house (*SloLove*), disco (*R&B Junkie*) and rock (*Sexhibition*), the record explores themes of love and romance through some of her most intimate songs. Posing topless and wearing nothing but low-rise jeans, the sensual tone is immediately set from the cover art.

For the first time, Jackson introduces listeners to multiple alter egos, one of whom she names Strawberry, who is introduced on track four, *Strawberry Bounce*. "She's another way to express and expose a deeper part of me," Jackson explained. "It's not an everyday indulgence. Not even every week. But every now and then I like playing around in that mode."

She continued: "A songwriter is like a novelist. You invent characters. Because they're born out of your brain, they reflect you. But good characters are independent of you and live lives of their own. I hope Strawberry is a good character. Sexually, she's on fire. She doesn't mince words. She has to have it and doesn't care who knows it."

Unapologetically explicit, Jackson outdid all her previous sex jams by recording *Warmth* – a notorious ballad about giving oral sex. She sings: *'My hands wrapped around, strokin', up and down / But nothing can compare to the warmth of my mouth / I love every sound you make when I'm down.'* Questioned about some of the lyrics during an appearance on 'Friday Night With Jonathan Ross', Jackson insisted, "It's nothing different than what I've done in the past." In a 2008 interview for VH1, Rich Juzwiak asked if it was intentional for her to sound like she was singing with something in her mouth. Jackson replied: "Yeah. There was something in my mouth."

The song is followed up by *Moist* with Jackson on the receiving end: *'Feel my rain come, pourin', soakin', longin' your lips, baby / You make it so moist / When my ocean's overflowin', afterglowin' take me / You make me so moist.'* Talking about the song's placement after *Warmth*, Jackson told Juzwiak: "It becomes my turn after it's his."

With the Super Bowl fiasco fresh in people's minds, it was suggested that Jackson toned down the suggestive lyrics. Sticking to her guns, Jackson didn't. "A lot of people had concerns and wanted me to take certain songs off the album, but I refused, because in doing so I wouldn't be who I am. I'm not going to change, and that's fine. Either they like it, or they don't," she told USA Today.

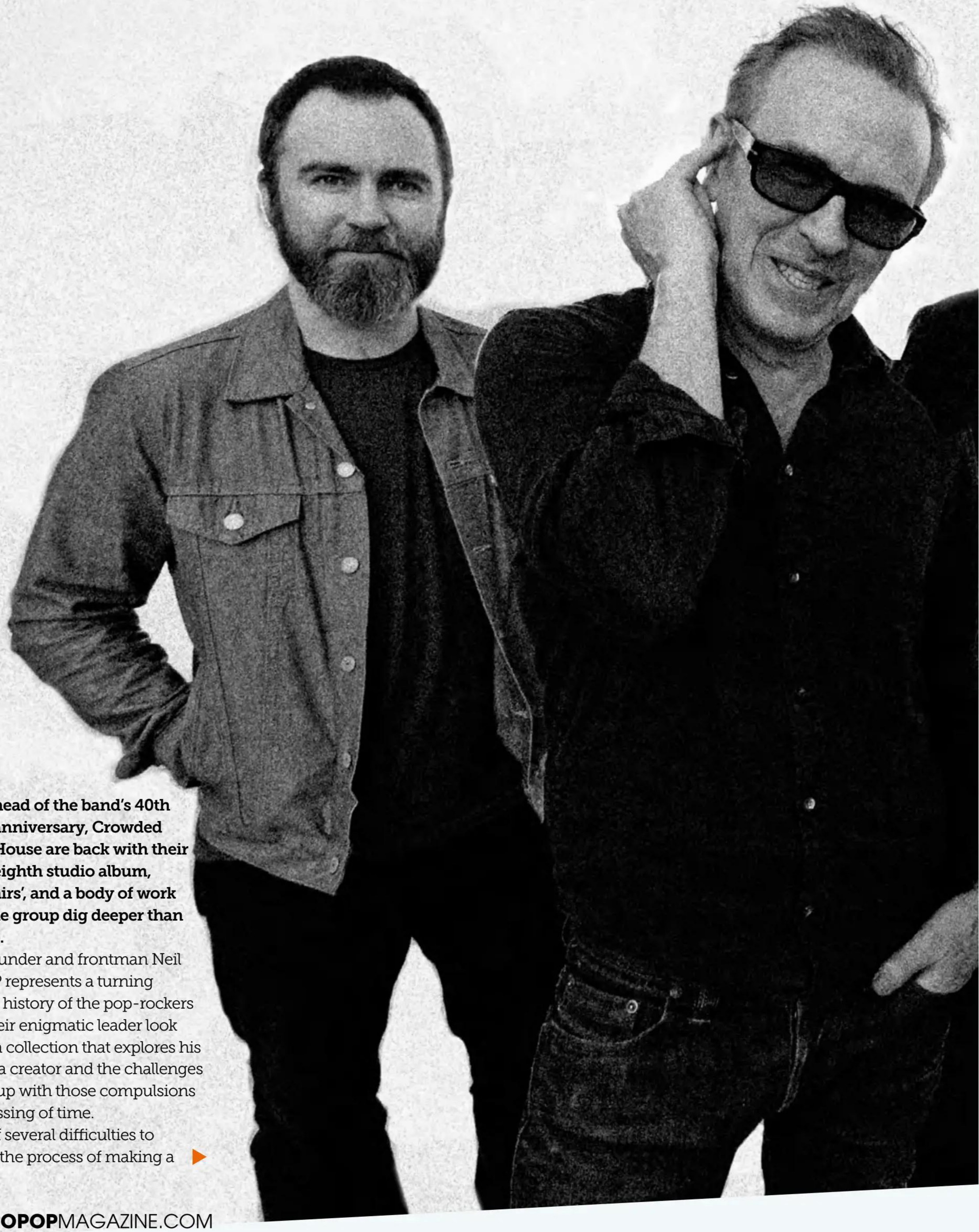
The album's third and final single, *All Nite (Don't Stop)*, featured influences from electro-funk and dancehall and was issued with a So So Def remix with Elephant Man. Taking listeners to the clubs, the energetic song is a classic anthem from Jackson. Doing what she does best, the Francis Lawrence-directed video saw Jackson performing choreography in front of a huge neon 'Damita Jo' logo inside an abandoned hotel with a troupe of dancers.

Critically, 'Damita Jo' was met with mixed reviews but remains a favourite with fans. It was the first album since 1989's 'Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation 1814' where she didn't promote the album with a tour. She had plans to hit the road in the summer of 2004 with Mario Winans as the opening act but dates were never announced. At the Grammys, the album received a nomination for Best Contemporary R&B Album while *All Nite (Don't Stop)* was named the Best Pop Song at the 2005 BMI London Awards. In the years following, Jackson would continue to release music, but the blacklist from Viacom wouldn't ultimately end until she released her ninth album, 'Discipline', in 2008.

Two decades on and the legacy of 'Damita Jo' is louder than ever. No stranger to paying homage to Jackson, pop princess Britney Spears titled her 2013 album after her first and middle name, 'Britney Jean'. Beyoncé also took a leaf out of Jackson's book by using her persona, Sasha Fierce, for her 2008 album, 'I Am... Sasha Fierce'. For The Daily Telegraph's 120 Essential Pop Albums list, the outlet included 'Damita Jo' and described it as a "luscious lost 2004 classic."

Just last year, Australian pop star Troye Sivan released his third studio LP, 'Something To Give Each Other', and referenced 'Damita Jo' as a major influence. "That album for me just hit such a sweet spot, with this warmth that I love in pop music," he told Entertainment Weekly. "It's almost super sweet — there's something borderline bubblegum about the melodies — but then the taste level is so high. It's also totally infused with sex and R&B." Jackson's fans, also referred to as the Jan Fam, have claimed the Super Bowl Sunday as Janet Jackson Appreciation Day, and made a campaign this year to get 'Damita Jo' back in the charts, creating the hashtag #StreamDamitaJo. **RP**

A GREATER



Ahead of the band's 40th anniversary, Crowded House are back with their eighth studio album, 'Gravity Stairs', and a body of work that sees the group dig deeper than ever before.

Led by founder and frontman Neil Finn, the LP represents a turning point in the history of the pop-rockers and sees their enigmatic leader look inward for a collection that explores his mindset as a creator and the challenges of keeping up with those compulsions with the passing of time.

It's one of several difficulties to navigate in the process of making a ▶

PLAN

Returning with their introspective new album 'Gravity Stairs', Crowded House's **Neil Finn** and **Nick Seymour** open up on the project and look back on four decades of music!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Crowded House (l-r): Liam Finn, Nick Seymour, Mitchell Froom, Neil Finn, Elroy Finn

“SOMETIMES I END UP THINKING: ‘HAVE I ACTUALLY IMPROVED ANYBODY’S LIFE BY EXPLAINING WHY I WROTE SOMETHING?’”

NEIL

record, as the five-piece discovered when attempting to create their latest project from various corners of the world and in stolen moments while touring the globe.

OH HI

"I did put it out there that next time, in terms of the mechanics of getting things done, we should set aside six weeks and all be in the same place to get most of the work done when we're all able to be in the room," reflects frontman Neil of the band's creative process on the back of completing 'Gravity Stairs'.

The New Zealander remains at the core of the band along with original bassist, Australian-born Nick Seymour. The current line-up also includes American keyboard player Mitchell Froom, and Finn's sons Liam and Elroy, with the various band members residing in different continents across the planet.

"It slows things down, there's no doubt, but we've got accustomed to it and on the positive side, everyone gets a little bit of time in their own zone to try stuff and not be judged as you might be if you're in the same room," he adds, with Nick interjecting: "On most of our records prior to this one and the last one, we'd have those production periods of at least eight weeks, but this time we had windows of days before a tour started, or at the end of a tour, where we could go into the studio. So there wasn't a single block of time."

It's no surprise, then, that 'Gravity Stairs' stands out as one of the most creative, boundary-pushing and idiosyncratic releases in Crowded House's repertoire, yet there's a thematic consistency that runs through the 11-song collection. "The ultimate aim is to make something that sounds like it was the easiest thing in the world and hide the process as much as possible from scrutiny," chimes Neil.

But if the process is something the band is keen to conceal, Finn's lyrics on the new material are particularly introspective and often tackle the nature of mortality - a subject that's clearly been on the singer-songwriter's mind. How does he feel playing that out so publicly? "It's really hard to know what the overall effect will be - people find things in their own good time," he muses. "The interesting thing about going out and talking about a record is you find yourself having to talk about stuff you hadn't thought to talk about. Whether to create some sort of false mythology about that or to tell the truth. There's arguments for both...

"I have found myself analysing my own lyrics for the first time and it helps me a little bit to work out: 'Can I talk about this? Can I actually describe what it's about?' But sometimes I end up thinking: 'Have I actually improved anybody's life by explaining why I wrote something?' I don't know what the answer is, really."

His words may be a puzzle for fans to piece together but for Liam and Elroy it must be striking to hear their dad sing so openly about life and death, let alone play those tracks live on stage with him, I pose. Neil laughs: "I think it's the sexual songs that are more upsetting for them! I did write a song called *When You Come* back in the day and *that* wasn't really the origin of the song, but I was aware that people might read it in that particular way and it has been referred to on stage as a cause of deep embarrassment."

Of the family dynamics during their shows, Nick adds: "I'm always shocked when we're on stage together and Liam will refer to Neil as 'dad'. Sometimes I do a double-take, like 'Who's dad?'"

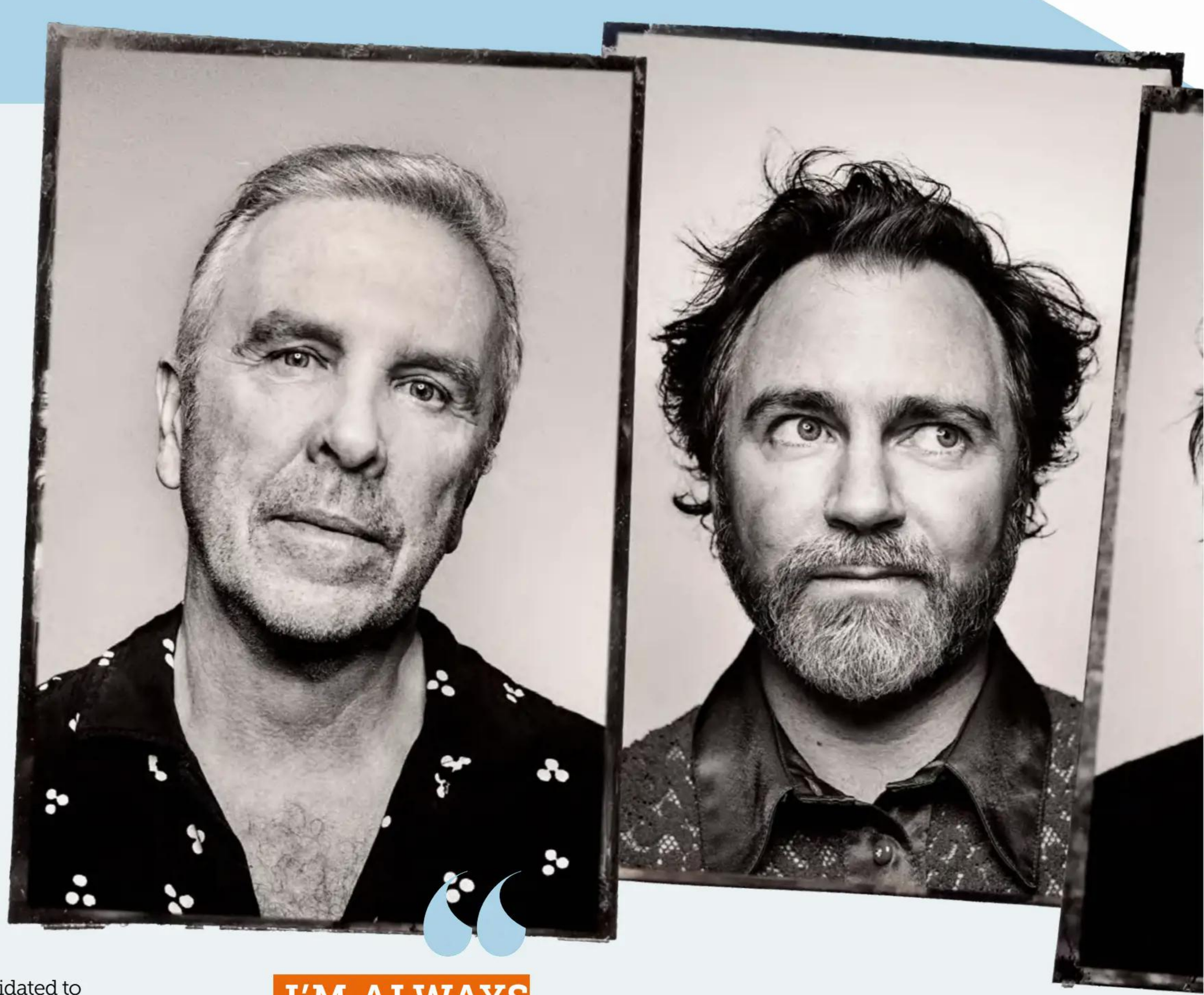
LIFE'S IMITATION

When Crowded House formed, Finn had already made his mark on the charts as a member of Split Enz, scoring hits such as *I Got You*, *One Step Ahead*, *History Never Repeats* and *Message To My Girl*. When they separated in 1984, he and the band's drummer Paul Hester formed the new act, with Nick auditioning for his place in the line-up.

> **CALLING MYSELF A MUSICIAN WAS A STRUGGLE FOR A LONG TIME FOR ME, BECAUSE I ALWAYS THOUGHT I WAS A BIT OF AN IMPOSTER**
>
> **NICK**

"He was jumping around in the control room which, to be honest, is one of the reasons that he got the job - because he was looking like he really wanted it," Neil laughs, turning to Nick: "What would your dad say? 'You're always putting yourself across!'" It's no surprise he was so keen to join the group; at the time, Nick was doing standby props on a film - photographing each take to ensure continuity between scenes - and had to get someone to cover him at the last minute. "My car was full of polaroids and I remember being *very* stressed at that audition, I really was," he adds with a shudder.

But being surrounded by established players was a stumbling block he had to overcome. "Calling myself a musician was a struggle for a long time for me, because I always thought I was a bit of an imposter," Nick admits. "But now, I'm quite comfortable calling myself a musician and can actually recognise that I can represent with professional musicians." Case in point, the pair's BBC Radio 2 Piano Room session with the



BBC Concert Orchestra. "There was a genuine, assumed, shared validation of all the musicians collected there, whereas years ago, I would have been too intimidated to walk into a room full of post-Conservatorium trained classical musicians," he says.

During the set, they performed the band's classic hit *Four Seasons In One Day*, along with the album's lead single *Oh Hi* and a cover of Petula Clark's *Downtown*. "It was pretty intimidating because Nick and I were playing together for the first time as a two-piece, we were playing two songs that we had barely played ever *and* we arranged *Oh Hi* completely differently than on the album," Neil points out. "But it was sort of great because it just kept everything right in the moment and we were right on the edge of our seats the whole process. I think it turned out really well!"

It's surprising to hear Neil speak so positively about the performance, as he admits he "finds it hard to watch things back that I've just done". How, then, does he feel when listening back to classics like *Don't Dream It's Over*, say? "I'm long past it with that one," he chuckles. "I might have, in the immediate aftermath of recording the album, thought something about certain tracks, but one of the things I'm pleased with about this record is that I went in for some of those details that I wasn't happy with. You don't get the chance very often - and the danger of that is you can over-sculpt and over-polish - but I *was* able to fix things that were bugging me on this record and not affect the overall vitality of the track. So yeah, there's a lot of details that have been quite beautifully ironed out."

> **I'M ALWAYS SHOCKED WHEN WE'RE ON STAGE TOGETHER AND LIAM WILL REFER TO NEIL AS 'DAD'. SOMETIMES I DO A DOUBLE-TAKE, LIKE 'WHO'S DAD?'**
>
> **NICK**

THE HOWL

On 'Gravity Stairs', there are several moments in which the group leans into an organic, live soundscape, such as on opening number, *Magic Piano*, which was "almost a fully-live take", according to Neil. They revisited a few elements at a later date, but the song that launches the album remains largely as it was in the recording studio.

"Some of the time it's a burden to be so obsessed with getting things right, because sometimes they don't go right for days and it's tempting just to abandon it and look elsewhere," he considers. "I don't seem to have that mentality, so it sometimes weighs me down feeling the lash of the muse but not the inspiration. But on [*Magic Piano*], we worked on it a lot to get it to the point where the live tape was really good and the minute we listened back to it, we thought: 'Actually yeah, that's fucking good!' It was the first song we recorded on the album and it's the first track on the record, so it has really earned its place."

On the second half of the record, the cinematic *Black Water, White Circle* is another track that developed "in a really instinctive manner", Nick says: "I started seeing images as to where it was going to

the next section: this reminds me of that sort of scene, then there's this little bit, that should be double time... We were actually all participating in this moveable piece that was bubbling away."

The final track, *Night Song*, also happened by chance when Neil recorded a guy outside of his window in Los Angeles at 3am. He features on the record - "I would be quite happy if he suddenly turned up and said, 'Hey, that's me, you owe me some money'. I'd give him some!" - with Nick adding of the song: "It moves from section to section, just as your subconscious brain does when you're falling asleep, and then at the end of the piece of music this guy wakes you up and you're actually awake and conscious."

It wasn't a one-off either. "I have acres of stuff on my iPhone," Neil admits. "It's good source material and I only use about five per cent of what I record, but if I'm in a in a good ambient space, like a train station or a noisy restaurant and it's bouncing off the walls in a cool way, I'll record it and it sometimes becomes good ambient material. Sometimes the sound of machinery has a musical thing about it too."

Another influence on his musicianship in recent years has been his stint in Fleetwood Mac; Neil replaced Lindsey Buckingham in the line-up back in 2018 and embarked on a world tour with the group, playing hits from their 50-year history. "We're a different band in terms of the sonic arrangement, angles that we bring, so Fleetwood Mac was kind of a deviation and there were inspiring things about that. I did do a bass track recently on a song purely along the lines of what John McVie might have done."

> **SOME OF THE TIME IT'S A BURDEN TO BE SO OBSESSED WITH GETTING THINGS RIGHT**
>
> **NEIL**

Nick laughs: "Prior to him joining Fleetwood Mac, he would never default into a blues riff on a guitar, but he was trading off with Mike Campbell up there, so I think it definitely softened his hard edges a little bit."

Of course, Crowded House is now his main focus and with the band's four decade milestone on the horizon, it seems 'Gravity Stairs' and their summer shows are just the tip of the iceberg. "We want to go to South America next year, because we haven't been there yet, so that would be a nice thing," Neil smiles. "And then something will happen to acknowledge the anniversary. I don't know what, but we started in 1985 so it would be interesting to look back at the diaries and go from there..." **RP**

● ***'Gravity Stairs' is out May 31 on BMG. Crowded House are playing across the UK this summer. Tickets are on sale now.***

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

An Italian soujourn

The Feeling made their UK chart debut in 2005 with hits like *Sewn*, *Fill My Little World* and *Never Be Lonely*, all three of which went Top 10 and featured on their first album, 'Twelve Stops And Home'.

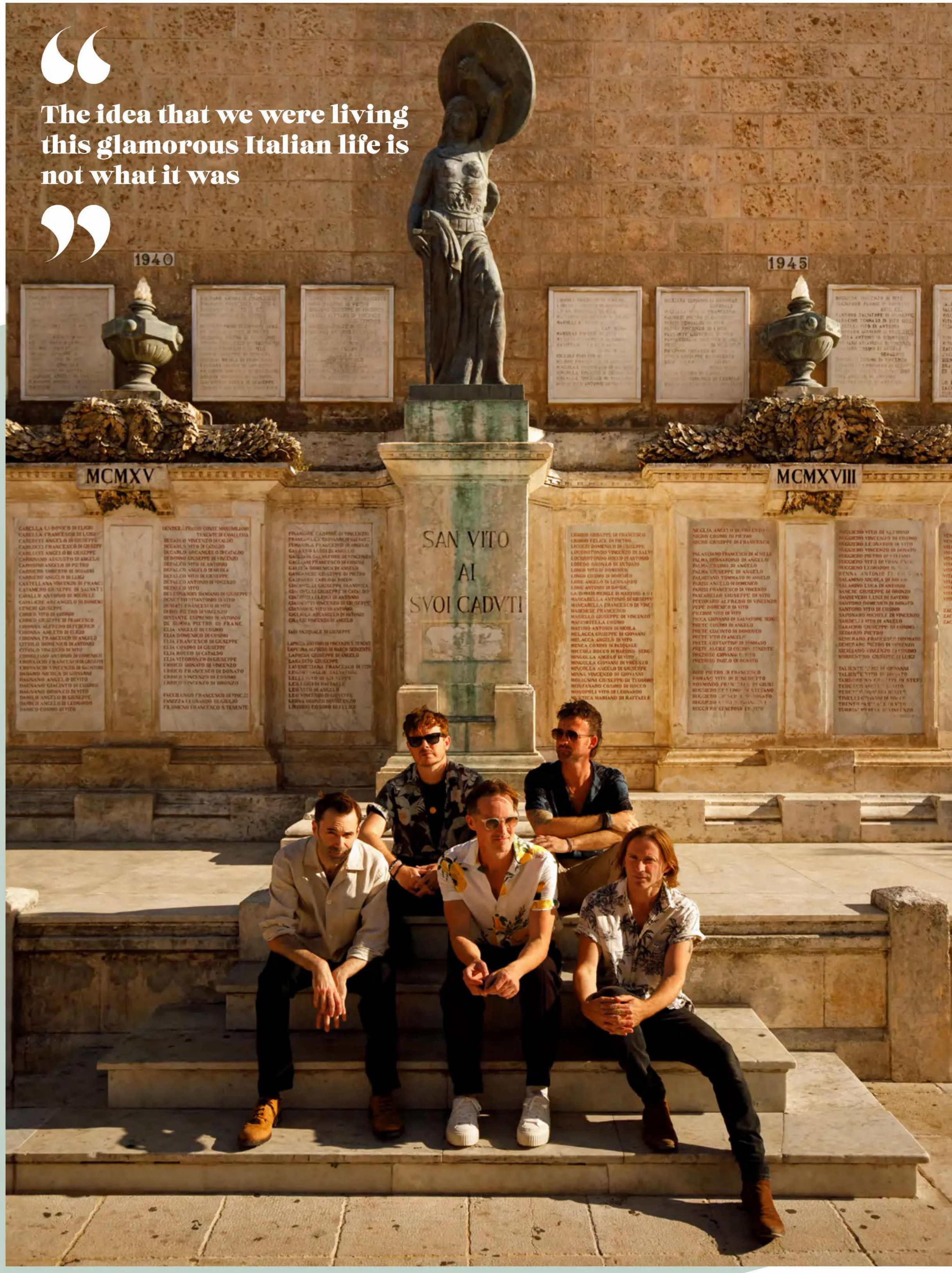
But the band's history dates back to the mid-1990s, when singer Dan Gillespie Sells and bassist Richard Jones met at the BRIT School in Croydon, playing in various acts until the line-up as it stands today was complete.

With their seventh studio album, 'San Vito', arriving this month, the group's frontman tells all about the project, which was written and recorded in Southern Italy and influenced by the local culture,

For their latest album, The Feeling jetted off to the town of San Vito Dei Normanni - an experience worlds away from their usual creative process, frontman **Dan Gillespie Sells** says!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

The Feeling (l-r): Paul Stewart, Dan Gillespie Sells, Richard Jones, Kevin Jeremiah, Ciaran Jeremiah


“The idea that we were living this glamorous Italian life is not what it was”
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food and pizzica music - and, of course, the titular patron saint of dancers and entertainment.

EYES OPEN

"It sounds more fabulous than it was," laughs Dan of their European adventure. "We were in a town in Puglia, which is quite trendy but also quite a scrubby, beautiful, but properly rural part of Italy."

They made several visits to the town, starting last February - "It was completely closed - the idea that we were living this glamorous italian life is not what it was," he chuckles - and visiting several times throughout the year, in March and September, totalling four weeks altogether.

"We found a studio near Richard's house down there and we just fell in love with it," he beams. "We knew it was a great opportunity and the guy who owned the studio let us just have the run of the place, which was amazing. He literally said, 'Here's the keys - enjoy!'"

Creating with just the five band members - Dan, Richard, Kevin and Ciaran Jeremiah (guitars and keyboards, respectively) and Paul Stewart (Drums) - in one room, without external producers or engineers, is a setup familiar to the band over the past two decades, but working in a larger space also had its benefits.

In the past, The Feeling had recorded predominantly in Dan's studio, the Doghouse in Hackney, London, but there was a hitch. "It was a lovely space but it was never quite big enough to do the full band set-up in one room and track everything fully-live in one room," he admits. "But this was a really big, beautiful studio that allowed us to do that and also work with local musicians, so it was nice to mix it up and go somewhere else."

It also eliminated the distractions that come with working close to home. "My family is my boyfriend and dog," he smiles. "But the other guys' families are five kids or three kids - all those different versions of 'family' that they have - and when we're in London it's easy for us to get pulled away. In Italy, there was no option; we were there and we could spend all day focused on quite an intense kind of creativity. We really did blitz it and get on with it and I really enjoyed that."

The album clocks in at 12 songs which, over the course of the four weeks it was written, equates to one track every 2.3 days. It seems impressive but Dan maintains the band's history gives them a "shorthand" when working together that enables them to produce material "efficiently".

"I can sit at the piano and play something, and I know what they're going to play and they know what I'm going to play," he shares, "so we had plenty of time. And a few songs we just jammed; there was this old keyboard that had like a really good repeat function and one of the songs just came out of this mad keyboard sound that I kind of built a song out of."

JOIN IN THE NOISE

With seven albums under their belt, The Feeling have written plenty of songs together, but outside of the set-up Dan has been impressively prolific, writing for stars including Sophie Ellis-Bextor (who is married to Richard) and composing the music for the musical 'Everybody's Talking About Jamie'.

"I've never taken a tally; I'll go weeks and weeks without writing anything and then I'll do three songs in a day," he shrugs of his expansive repertoire. "But then again, some songs take me two weeks to finish and others take six months to finish. I see them a bit like rolling rocks; sometimes you push it and it won't move, then another day it'll budge a little bit or sometimes it'll absolutely fly.

> **Most artists would have more of a vision, but I think our thing has been that we're in it because we love it**

"Every song is different and that's the same with musicals and the other work that I do as a writer - even the scores - because some days you have good days, and some days you have bad days. But as long as you're showing up, you've done your work, you know?"

Naturally his lyrics come from a personal place - lead single *The Right Wrong* is an anthem celebrating queer freedom, while the Lucie Silvas duet *I Won't Sleep Tonight* deals with the intricacies of relationships - but when it comes to the meaning behind the material, Dan's reluctant to divulge too much. "I don't want my version of the song to be the reason you like it - I want you to just be able to hear it and bring something to it," he reflects. "Sometimes I write a lyric that is pretty on the nose and it's really obvious what the song is about, but sometimes I write a lyric that is a bit abstract and lets people in so that they can bring something to it.

"I can't really say anything more than what you've heard, because it's not designed to be anything else. It doesn't need a plaque; it's not one of those pieces of art that needs an explanation in order to make sense of it.

That's not what I do."

That's not to say his writing hasn't changed over time. "As I get older, my songwriting either gets playful or there's a serious amount of tongue-in-cheek, because I'm aware that a 45-year-old man making pop music is slightly ludicrous," he giggles. "I'm always aware that, even if I sing something really poppy, it might seem a bit earnest, so there's always a bit of tongue-in-cheek with it and I try to make sure that comes through as well. I want that to come across.

"Sometimes I want to do something that is really pop and almost stupid - and I still want to be able to do it - but I'm aware that I'm a 45-year-old man. You know, some artists are like Peter Pan, right? They stay in this childlike state. But I'm not one of those people; I'm aware of my age and I'm aware of where I've come from and where I'm going. But I love pop music and I will always make pop music - I see it as a high art form - but I'm also sometimes singing something that's just delightful and a bit stupid, so I'm happy to do it and I'll commit to it."

CALL IT HOME

In the early 2000s, The Feeling signed with Island Records for their first three albums, peaking at No. 2 with their debut, topping the UK charts with follow-up 'Join With Us' (2008) and scoring more Top 20 hits including *Love It When You Call* and *I Thought It Was Over*.

Since then the industry has seen numerous changes, but for the first time in decades The Feeling are launching 'San Vito' with a tour of UK record stores for in-store signings that'll bring them closer than ever to fans. "It reminds me of the old days, which is kind of pleasing," Dan smiles. "There was a point in which the industry became somewhat unrecognisable to me; I'd hear words coming at me from record labels that I didn't even understand and I'd be like, 'Can't we just talk about records?' I kind of didn't know where we stood."

> **"I'm aware that a 45-year-old man making pop music is slightly ludicrous"**

What was it, then, that encouraged them to keep going? "Making another Feeling album, for me, is a celebratory thing. It's comforting," smiles the singer. "And it's a great outlet for me; they're a great bunch of musicians who allow me to express myself musically and facilitate that in a way that is really nonjudgmental. I feel really safe creating around them and saying what I want to say around them because they just get me, so it's a nice place to be. I feel like I'm going home when I go and work with the boys."

Seven albums in and with the original line-up intact, it's a testament to the power of endurance. "Look at Sophie [Ellis-Bextor]," he exclaims. "She's an inspiration because she's stayed in the game, she's doing her thing and she's doing it for the right reasons." It was 'Saltburn' that helped her reach a global audience with *Murder On The Dancefloor*, but which of The Feeling's songs would Dan pick for a sync opportunity?

"There's a song called *Strange* which is one of my favourite songs," he says of the 2006 album track. "We made *Rosé* a single, which ended up being this campaign for Burberry and stuff, but *Strange* was the other competitor for the fifth single and I think it could make a great moment in a movie one day."

Beyond the new album and its accompanying tour, which plays across the UK through May, the band's plans for the future are open. "We never know what's next - we just know that the only constant in our lives

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

artistically has been this band and we come back to it because it's what we've done since we were 16," Dan grins. "Most artists would have more of a vision, but I think our thing has been that we're in it because we love it. All of our other projects are where we get to be ambitious and where we might want to take over the world, but The Feeling is the place where we come back and, in a very unpressured way, express ourselves. It's purely joyful. I think that's the secret of our success and why we're still here, which is kind of glorious.

"Also, I think that the music business is such a turbulent business that for us to have stayed on course and carried on through is enough to celebrate right now," he adds as the band approaches its 20th anniversary. "It's not like we've ever broken up and come back; we've all done our other things, but it's never stopped The Feeling from being this constant thing and I think that staying in the game, staying creative and keeping it fresh is what we really love." **RP**

'San Vito' is out April 19 on Kartel. The Feeling's UK tour launches May 3 in Nottingham. Tickets are on sale now.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Collecting 45 years of material, **Neil Arthur** celebrates all things Blancmange and his synth-pop legacy with Stephen Luscombe with their decades-spanning best-of!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Blancmange's rise to prominence in the early-1980s delivered a run of hit singles including *Living On The Ceiling*, *Blind Vision* and *Don't Tell Me*, but their record-releasing days were short.

Together, Neil Arthur and Stephen Luscombe released only three albums together between 1982 and 1985, before calling it quits the following year, not to re-enter the studio together for two-and-a-half decades.

'Blanc Burn' (2011) was the final offering from the pair before poor health saw Stephen step back, but Neil has continued flying the synth-pop flag and after a particularly prolific decade he's revisiting the pair's history with the career-spanning retrospective 'Everything Is Connected'.

BLIND VISION

"I'm probably busier now than I was 45 years ago," laughs Neil as we sit down to discuss the latest Blancmange offering, which arrives 45 years since the band formed. The core duo were originally joined by drummer Laurence Stevens, who departed shortly after their beginnings, and for Neil and Stephen their musical endeavour was never meant to last.

Case in point: 'Blancmange'. "I was never a fan of the name *but* I kind of like the idea of it, because it was intended to be throwaway and possibly only ever used once, because I was involved with [previous band] L360 and the main thing I was doing was studying art, which is what I thought I'd be doing for the rest of my life. But we had to have a name for this noise we were making because we were asked to play at the college."

It was decided at Stephen's house party; Neil turned up with a curry, which he managed to spill on the floor and ended up scraping into a pint glass, after Stephen greeted him with a blancmange in the

shape of a rabbit. "It was either A Pint Of Curry or Blancmange - those were the choices," he chuckles. "And we were originally called The Blancmange, but the record label asked us whether we'd consider changing the name when we signed to them in 1982. In a way, I've learned to love it, because one of the other reasons we called ourselves that is because at the time there were lots of pretentiously-named post-punk bands around and it was kind of a reaction to that."

Prior to signing with London Records, the duo released their first EP, 'Irene And Mavis', in 1980 and found greater exposure with the track *Sad Day*, which featured on the 'Some Bizzarre Album' (1981), alongside acts such as Soft Cell and Depeche Mode. After a tour with Japan they found minor success in 1982 with the singles *God's Kitchen/I've Seen the Word* (No. 65) and *Feel Me* (No. 46), before breaking into the UK Top 10 with *Living On The Ceiling* from their debut album 'Happy Families'.

Although marketed as a synth-pop band, it was a while before either Neil or Stephen became even close to owning a synthesiser. "To actually own a synthesiser wasn't even a part of the game," Neil insists. "We sometimes were able to borrow them, but on 'Irene And Mavis' the nearest thing to a synthesiser is a rhythm unit that we borrowed off Mark Cox, who was in a band called Mass, formerly Rema-Rema. All the rest of it is basically distorted guitars, treated guitars and very *very* psychedelically treated keyboards."

It wasn't just traditional instruments the pair used to create their records either. "Our initial noise-making journey was to use anything that was on hand, really, so we'd borrow a tape recorder and make instruments out of things we had around," he reflects. "Even a cardboard box, you could put mics next to it, knock on it, then slow it down or speed it up - if we were able to borrow a tape machine - and see where we could go with it."

And the most unusual makeshift instrument they played? "The first time I actually saw Steven perform with his band Miru was in the college bar, he was either playing a washing machine or he was playing a saxophone connected to a Hoover that somebody had managed to get on reverse thrust - so it wasn't sucking, it was blowing. That's the kind of route we took.

IF DURAN DURAN'S RIO WAS THE HARRODS VERSION OF A MUSIC VIDEO, THEN LIVING ON THE CEILING WAS THE WOOLWORTHS VERSION

AT THE TIME THERE WERE LOTS OF PRETENTIOUSLY-NAMED POST-PUNK BANDS AROUND AND THE NAME BLANCMANGE WAS KIND OF A REACTION TO THAT

"I also remember making one out of a Smash instant mashed potato tin; we put some dried barley inside of it, tin foil on top and played it with little brushes. I think that features on 'Irene And Mavis' too - it didn't make it onto *Blind Vision* or anything like that!"

DON'T TELL ME

When Blancmange signed with London Records, Neil and Stephen swiftly quit their jobs in design and began working on new material in the studio. "We'd been asked to record a demo that I think was for a Pepsi Cola advert, so that was my first experience of going into the studio," he beams. "We didn't get the job, which is typical of Blancmange, but we ended up using the song as a basis for *Wasted*."

It was also worlds away from the band's makeshift set-up in previous years. "We had a fantastic producer in Mike Howlett and a lot of guidance and steadying of our nerves to help us realise the potential of those first two songs [*God's Kitchen/I've Seen the Word*]," Neil recalls. "So it was a great experience, really straightforward and simple, and then we met [Peter Gabriel collaborator] David Rhodes who played guitar on both tracks."

The double-A-side and its follow-up failed to crack the UK Top 40, a benchmark in the 1980s for bands to land a coveted 'Top Of The Pops' performance, but the third single from 'Happy Families' was a runaway hit. "I don't know whether many people know this, but *Kind* was originally gonna be the third single and it's only when we started remixing *Living On The Ceiling* that [tablas player Pandit] Dinesh and Deepak [Khazauchi, sitar] came along and added those incredible sounds that the record company chose it as the next single, which we were happy with."

It wasn't just a killer track that helped Blancmange climb into the upper regions of the charts. "The story of *Living On The Ceiling* becoming a hit is also the fact that we made a video for it, which was our first video," he adds of the clip, which was set in Cairo, Egypt. "If Duran Duran's *Rio* was the Harrods version of a music video, then ours was the Woolworths version; the budget was miniscule, but somehow,we had the most incredible director who managed to make it look like

it cost a lot more than it did. And we had a massive amount of help from the Egyptian government as well on that one, so making it was a lot of fun.

"Although I must say, most of us were very ill on our return journey, to the point where some people had to book into hotels and stay extra nights because they picked up something that you probably don't want any more details of at the moment..."

With three hit albums and multiple singles under their belt come the mid-'80s, Blancmange were immersed in the pop star life. "It was all a bit of a blur and me and Stephen used to have to pinch ourselves from time to time," Neil reflects, before pointing to the moment he realised just how famous they'd become. "I remember the first 'Top Of The Pops', going through

"I'M VERY PROUD OF WHAT WE DID TOGETHER IN THE '80S AND I'M ALSO EQUALLY PROUD OF WHAT I'M ABLE TO DO NOW"

the run through being slightly surprised at what the BBC studio was like, thinking: 'I thought he was gonna be a bit more sophisticated than this.' Obviously, the technology probably was, but there were so many run throughs for the sound and lights. In fact, I noticed this person on the floor who was singing along and

he knew all the words really well - when the lights went up, I looked down and it was George Michael! I thought, 'OK, that's interesting', because he probably knew the lyrics better than I did!"

SEEN THE WORLD

Just half a decade into their career together, Neil and Stephen announced that they were breaking up in June 1986 after a Greenpeace concert at London's Royal Albert Hall, with the frontman admitting the duo had become "victims of the machine" come their third LP 'Believe You Me' (1985).

"We'd kind of exhausted ourselves and needed to step back a bit more," he recalls. "I really didn't enjoy that Greenpeace gig; I didn't like what I felt I'd become and it was tearing apart mine and Stephen's relationship as friends. I'd rather be a friend of Stephen's than be in a situation where we're making music and not enjoying it. Although I really enjoyed making the final album, I think we could have possibly gone about it a different way and I needed to get away from the whole situation of being in a band where you were only as good as your next single.

"It was really tough and I'm quite happy to admit that I made mistakes - and hopefully did some things right - but I thought, 'Surely we started doing this for it to be fun', and it was becoming that it wasn't fun, so it was time to stop for better or worse. I think in stopping it we preserved a friendship that wouldn't have endured had we not ended it at that point."

I NOTICED THIS PERSON AT 'TOP OF THE POPS' WHO KNEW ALL THE WORDS REALLY WELL - WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT UP, I LOOKED DOWN AND IT WAS GEORGE MICHAEL

In 2011 - a quarter of a century after their split - Blancmange reunited for a fourth album, 'Blanc Burn', which remains their final release as a duo. After suffering from heart issues, Stephen was forced to leave the band, with Neil continuing to record and tour as Blancmange with his blessing. Health-wise, he says Stephen is "not doing very well at all", but the longtime pals are still in contact and it's him who gave Neil the "kick up the ass" to put out the 'Everything Is Connected' compilation. "So that's what I did," he smiles. "You know, I do it because I want to do it as well. I'm very proud of what we did together in the '80s and I'm also equally proud of what I'm able to do now. Being creative is probably when I'm happiest."

That extends to the band's artwork too, with Neil involved in the "minute detail of the design", and while he's putting together a live set for the forthcoming best-of tour, which plays across the UK in May and June, he's got new music on the go too. "There's definitely going to be new Blancmange music next year," he teases, "and more to come from the other projects I'm involved with too. More Fader, more Near Future, more The Remainder, more Nil By Mouth instrumental albums. Lots more to come!" **RP**

● ***'Everything Is Connected - The Best Of Blancmange 1979-2024' is out May 10 on London Records. Blancmange's UK tour launches May 16 in Newcastle. Tickets are on sale now.***

PHOTOS HELEN KINCAID

INTRODUCING...

VINCE FREEMAN

Releasing his first album has been a long time coming for **Vince Freeman**, but as he prepares to unleash 'Scars, Ghosts & Glory' this summer the singer-songwriter opens up on his journey so far!

It's been over a decade since Vince Freeman beamed into homes across the UK when he auditioned for the inaugural series of 'The Voice UK', but it's taken 12 long years for him to finally materialise with his debut album.

He made it through to the Battle rounds as part of The Script frontman Danny O'Donoghue's team, but after being knocked out by eventual-finalist Bo Bruce, his rise back to prominence was a long climb, playing 300 gigs a year while also working as a promoter of Shhhh at Ginglik, Shepherds Bush, where he gave early opportunities to the likes of Paolo Nutini, Jamie Cullum, Newton Faulkner, Rag 'n' Bone Man and Ed Sheeran, who even gave him a 'thank you' on his debut album.

Behind the scenes, though, he also battled chronic pain that saw the musician undergo three intense and invasive back surgeries that helped him finally get back on his feet. "I don't know that I realised at the time I was putting my life on hold - I was just fighting," he reflects. "I'm not trying to be stoic or pragmatic, but there's a lot of people out there that deal with chronic pain for their entire lives, so I feel extraordinarily lucky that I've managed to come out the other side."

This summer Vince finally arrives with 'Scars, Ghosts & Glory', stacked with 12 songs that document his journey over the past decade and see him re-emerge triumphant in the face of adversity. "Initially, I had this idea that it would be three very distinct sections and then I came to the conclusion that it was all a little bit too contrived," reflects the singer-songwriter. "The idea was that it would be the scars of the past, ghosts in the shadows of previous lives, and the little wins that you have that are the glories.

"I feel like I lost almost 10 years of my career to pain, and it's only in the last three years that I haven't taken a single painkiller for my back. I feel like I'm 15 years younger and the glory part for me is that kind of resurrection and being able to go: 'Right, watch me'."

In the build-up to the album, Vince has released a string of storming singles, including the fist-punching *Imposter*, gospel-infused *Powers*, and the gnarly *Blame Myself*. All have autobiographical foundations and it's a bold move for a newcomer to arrive with such a heavy, introspective record that lays bare his journey so far. "I'm always fascinated by the idea that music, especially once it's released, is almost a collaborative process with the listener," he reflects. "So once you've listened to say, for example, *Imposter*, it's yours to create memories with and to have your own idea of what it means to you. I love the fact that it's almost like a transfer of ownership."

There's a sense of the stars aligning in Vince's journey, not least when it comes to the circumstances surrounding him finally releasing his first album. As it did for most of us, the pandemic derailed the musician, switching gears and setting up a mobile coffee stall, Coffee Rocks,

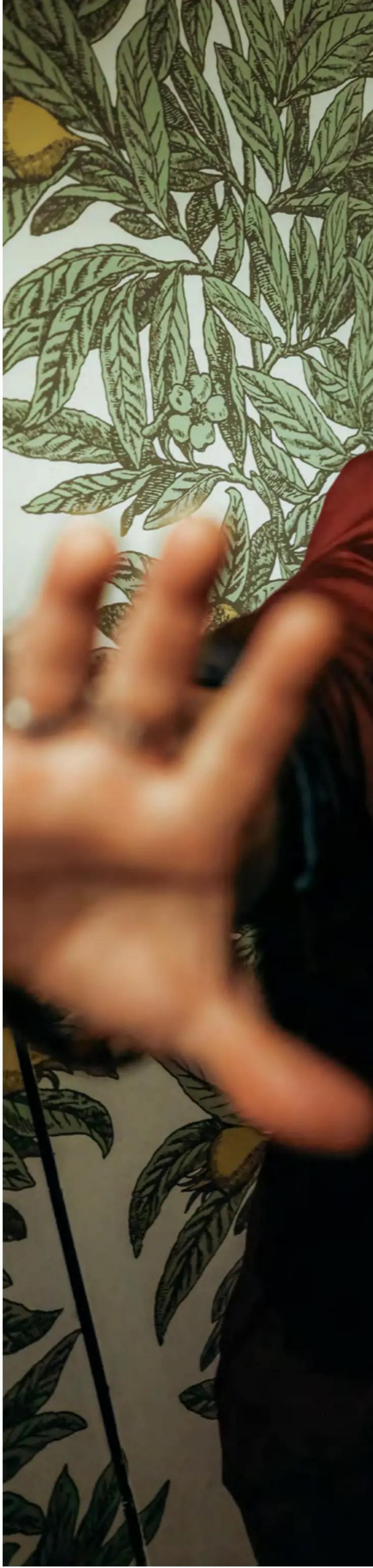

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

touring events and music festivals each week. It was at one of those events that he was approached by an entertainment lawyer buying coffee, which resulted in him being able to raise the funds to complete the project and set up his own label, Kinetic Records, to release it.

"If you asked me five years ago if I would be in this position where I consider myself a recording artist and I'm about to stand shoulder to shoulder with all these incredible artists and the talent that is out there at the moment, I would never have believed it," Vince admits. "I genuinely thought, at best, I might be able to carve out a writing career. So to be in a position where I'm actually the artist on this album and trying to do something that's quite difficult, which is releasing a commercial album that's also fiercely independent, is fucking incredible for me."

The road to releasing the new record has been a long one, but now Vince has his eyes on the path ahead and, going forward, he won't be doing things by halves. "I have often said to people: 'I haven't got time to emerge, I need to arrive.' This album is about acceptance, warts and all. I've got wrinkles and that's cool, that's fine.

"The next album is going to be about defiance; it's not going to be an angry thing, but the amount of times people go, 'Oh, you can't do that', and I like: 'Watch me!" I feel like the gift that I've been given with my talent and the opportunity that I've been afforded through investments from people that believe in my music has helped me to understand that I am good enough. So I like the idea of pushing the barrier a little bit."

And it won't, he says, be another 10 years before that second LP materialises. "I've probably written half of the album already," he adds, pointing out the "universal" subject matter of the upcoming tracks. "I bet you any money that if I went three doors down, knocked on somebody's door and was willing to listen to them, I wouldn't have to look very far to find a hero. I wouldn't have to look very far to find heartache or a heartbreaking story of triumph against adversity and all those kinds of things.

"Inclusion and togetherness are things that I really hold dear and all too often people are divided. But I feel like music is the most incredible art form that brings people together, so that's where I go from here - I keep going and write another album..." **RP**

> 'I have often said to people: 'I haven't got time to emerge, I need to arrive'

● ***'Scars, Ghosts & Glory' is out June 14 on Kinetic Records.***

NOW
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05.04.24

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

82

NONETHELESS

Pet Shop Boys return with their triumphant 15th album!

PHOTO ALASDAIR McLELLAN

82 ALBUMS

Conan Gray | Pet Shop Boys | Texas
The Feeling | Tony Hadley | UB40

88 REISSUES

ABBA | Belinda Carlisle | Billy Idol
Bruce Springsteen | Celine Dion | Dead Or Alive
Garbage | Manic Street Preachers | No Doubt
Orbital | Tina Turner

RATINGS EXPLAINED: ★★★★★ BRILLIANT ★★★★☆ STRONG ★★★☆☆ GOOD ★★☆☆☆ AVERAGE ★☆☆☆☆ POOR

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

PET SHOP BOYS
NONETHELESS
★★★★★

RELEASED: **April 26 *Parlophone***
FORMATS: **CD, 2CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 2LP White Vinyl (Inc. Bonus EP), 1LP Zoetrope Vinyl**

Four years since their last long-player, Pet Shop Boys make a glorious return with 'Nonetheless'.

Teaming up with producer James Ford, the 10-song collection showcases Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe as they stand today; a cacophony of dance anthems and introspective ballads that, together, make up the Pet Shop Boys sound.

"We wanted this album to be a celebration of the unique and diverse emotions that make us human," they say of their latest record. "From the more dance-orientated tracks to the raw poignancy of the introspective ballads, with their beautiful string arrangements, each track tells a story and contributes to the overall narrative of the album."

Much has happened on a global scale since their last outing, but on opening song and lead single, *Loneliness*, Tennant makes a rallying call to break all self-imposed notions of solitude and step out into the light. It's a mindset touched upon again in *Why Am I Dancing?*, on which he ponders reasons to be happy in a world as it exists today but can't seem to resist the (admittedly infectious) groove.

The romantic *A New Bohemia* yearns for the ideals of yesteryear - one of several moments that looks to the past while drawing up a blueprint for the future. Case in point: the rap in *New London Boy*, reminiscent of Pet Shop Boys' debut single *West End Girls*, at the core of a song dealing with Tennant's experience as a queer man in the capital back in the 1970s, and urging those in the LGBTQ+ community to live authentically today.

It's one of a handful of political moments on 'Nonetheless', including second single *Dancing Star*, inspired by the life of the ballet dancer, Rudolf Nureyev, who defected from the Soviet Union and became a global star, and *Bullet For Narcissus*, which adopts the viewpoint of Donald Trump's bodyguard accepting his fate.

But the thread that ties the record together is an unwavering sense of optimism for a better future, as captured in the pure pop anthem, *The Schlager Hit Parade*, centred on the German postwar pop explosion that paved the way into the second half of the 20th Century and beyond.

By the end of their latest three-album run, it was clear that Pet Shop Boys' decade-spanning partnership with Stuart Price had run its course, but in joining forces with Ford the duo appear reinvigorated and deliver a bold, current and exciting body of work that stands tall alongside the very best of their catalogue.

PHOTO ALASDAIR McLELLAN

UB40
UB45
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **April 19 *SoNo***
FORMATS: **CD, Cassette**

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Reggae icons UB40 celebrate four-and-a-half decades of hits on their aptly-titled new album 'UB45'.

Consisting of 14 tracks - half new recordings and half reworked hits from the group's catalogue - the set is their first with new frontman Matt Doyle and documents the latest phase in the evolution of the group through the years.

Praising Doyle for bringing "a new lease of life to our music", Robin Campbell says of the LP: "When you play songs over so many years, the arrangements and vocals evolve and change. These updated versions of our hits are still close to the originals, but now reflect how we perform them today and they sound better than ever."

Opening track *Home* fuses trademark UB40 beats and the powerful themes of inequality and bigotry that have characterised the band's output over the years, making for an essential addition to their repertoire, while *Champion* has already carved a place in history having become the official anthem of the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Meanwhile, the single *Gimme Some Kinda Sign* dates back to the seminal 1983 album 'Labour Of Love' and was one of Campbell's top picks to cover, alongside *Red Red Wine* which became a global hit off the back of that record and is among the reinterpreted material on offer.

By and large, the changes to the classic tracks are minimal, although a more 'live' sound reinforces the unity of UB40's latest iteration, which has cut its teeth on the live circuit extensively over the past few years.

The real strength of 'UB45' is the new material; with Doyle in tow, the group is re energised and, 45 years into their career, the band sounds effortlessly fresh and current. Delving into the archive makes sense given recent changes, and as an introduction to the new frontman the tracks come out strong, but what's more exciting is the prospect of future recordings that continue the UB40 legacy.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

CONAN GRAY
FOUND HEAVEN
★★★★★

RELEASED: **April 5 *Republic***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Blue Vinyl, 1LP Purple Vinyl, 1LP Yellow Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc Vinyl**

Returning with his strongest, most assured work to date, Conan Gray triumphs with his third studio album, 'Found Heaven'.

The 13-song set sees the US star work with producers including Max Martin, Greg Kurstin and Shawn Everett, among others, for a collection that ushers in a new era for the singer-songwriter and former YouTuber.

Deviating from the largely stripped-back, mid-tempo sounds of his first two records, 'Found Heaven' opens with reverberating choir vocals before launching into the synth-laden title song, signposting what's to come.

A run of superb pre-release singles are representative of the LP as a whole; *Killing Me* documents his evolution, from its acoustic piano opening through a pulsing electronic crescendo, while layered harmonies on *Lonely Dancers* create an intimacy in a bold soundscape that adds a new dimension to his sound.

Tapping into an '80s-inspired soundscape that's proven popular in recent years, tracks such as the epic, cinematic *Fainted Love*, clubby, atmospheric *Miss You*, and brilliantly bouncy *Bourgeoisieses* are instant highlights from the set.

An artist who has amassed several big-name fans along the way, Gray pays homage to numerous idols on 'Found Heaven', with the single *Alley Rose* heavy with the influence of Elton John - who named the star as one of the premier songwriters creating music today - while *Forever With Me* wouldn't sound out of place in Queen's songbook, with a touch of Freddie Mercury in his delivery.

Boys & Girls has echoes of Duran Duran's *Girls On Film*, underpinned by a slick electronic production, while the soaring, classic pop-rock sound of *Eye Of The Night*, complete with a huge key change, is timeless.

Closing with the vulnerable single *Winner* - a celebration of the freedom that comes with accepting defeat - it's ironic for a project that, by all accounts, is not only a defining album in Gray's career, but one of the finest records we've heard in a long time.

PHOTO MURIEK KNUD

TEXAS AND SPOONER OLDHAM
THE MUSCLE SHOALS SESSIONS

★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **March 29 *PIAS***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Green Vinyl**

Following up their latest best-of collection, Texas reimagine 12 of their classic tracks in an all-new collaboration with US musician Spooner Oldham.

Recorded at the renowned 'Fame Recording Studio' in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, during the summer of 2022, the album sees cuts from the band's repertoire stripped back to their bare bones, guided by the soulful voice of Sharleen Spiteri, accompanied by Oldham's piano lines.

On the experience, which was "like being a little kid in a sweet shop", the vocalist remarks: "The fact that Northern Soul music has been such a massive influence for Texas made the fit with Spooner just right.

"To reimagine the classics and break them down so you hear the clarity in the lyrics - it may give you a different take and a different feeling on these songs."

That's clear from the opening notes of *Halo* - the euphoric second single from their fourth studio album, 'White On Blonde' (1997) - which is carried by Spiteri's raw, nuanced vocals, with the absence of the original radio-friendly production bringing the lyrics to the fore.

Along with the 'Jump On Board' (2017) track *Let's Work It Out*, it's one of the more dramatically re-worked tracks on the collection which, although overhauling the instrumentation, largely sticks to the format of the originals, with the refrain of *Summer Son* and call-and-response on *The Conversation* still in tact.

That's not to take away from the fact that the material on offer is quite simply stunning; Spiteri's vocal performance, without the bells and whistles of the band's regular releases, places her among the finest of her generation, with the songs also re emerging in a new light that showcases the enduring quality of Texas' material over the past 35 years.

The additional cover versions are a neat if superfluous touch (we'd have happily taken a couple more reworked hits), and while 'The Muscle Shoals Sessions' isn't a project we'll be revisiting too often it more than earns its place in Texas' repertoire as a bonus victory lap in their career-spanning celebrations.

PHOTO CLYDE GATES

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

THE FEELING
SAN VITO
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **April 12 *Kartel***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Blue Vinyl**

Ditching Blighty for a stint in southern Italy, The Feeling return revitalised and refreshed on their seventh studio album 'San Vito'.

Created during several visits to the region, the record is rooted in the sound that took the band to the top of the charts in the mid-2000s, with a breadth of styles and touchstones that showcase a confidence that comes with two decades of success in the bag.

The muse also came from trading their usual Hackney recording sessions for the continent. "The sun, food and culture seeped through into the sounds we were making," says the band. "We brought in local brass, strings and pizzica / tarantella percussion players. It's very much an album by The Feeling but with a little Salento flavour mixed-in."

But opening number *War's Not Won* makes it clear the group remain faithful to themselves, with Dan Gillespie Sells tackling bigotry and prejudice in an autobiographical narrative that reflects his life as an LGBTQ+ person today.

My Way Up picks up on that perspective with a playfully intricate lyric, while lead single *The Right Wrong* is an ode to freedom and acceptance.

Opening the second half of the album, the bouncy *Sun Won't Shine* wouldn't sound out of place on The Feeling's debut album 'Twelve Stops and Home' (2006), while the vibrant brass on *Everyday And All Of The Night* conjures a new soundscape for the band that's a natural fit and elevates the modulating crescendo to new heights.

The five-and-a-half-minute Lucie Silvas collaboration *I Won't Sleep Tonight* is an undeniable highlight on the record that showcases her's and Dan's superb vocal blend, with a cinematic edge that captures the essence of his theatrical work.

The influence of their Italian adventure isn't as prominent as it could be - and where it is, it's particularly brilliant - but at its core 'San Vito' is not only a great album from The Feeling, but an excellent pop record that highlights the enduring strength and charm of the boys, who only seem to be getting better!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

TONY HADLEY
THE MOOD I'M IN
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **April 5 *Revolver***
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Blue Vinyl, 1LP Clear Vinyl, 1LP Green Vinyl, 1LP Red Vinyl**

PHOTO IZZEDEAN AL-YASSIN

Coinciding with his 'Big Swing Tour', Tony Hadley gets in the mood with a 10-song collection of inspired covers and cool originals underpinned by instrumentation that rivals his powerful vocals.

Opening with a reimagined rendition of The Doors' *Touch Me*, it's a move that feels wholly intentional, with the ex-Spandau Ballet frontman keen to set his latest release apart from other albums in the big band category.

Picking up on the brass of the original with added kick this time around, Hadley's inner Jim Morrison and Frank Sinatra trade-off on a recording that not only highlights the strength of his vocal performance more than four decades into his career, but also serves as a reminder of his prowess as a leading man.

The self-penned, salsa-leaning *Walk Of Shame* proves his fine penmanship, delivering an anthem that stands tall alongside the standards on the record, while the contemplative *Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered* and smooth *One For My Baby* emphasise his versatility in taking the sound in various directions and hitting the mark each time.

As do the late-night jazz of *I Wanna Be Around* and larger-than-life *Just A Gigolo*, with Hadley's voice the central thread running through the core of the LP.

Occasionally, 'The Mood Im In' ventures a little too far into familiar territory and the strength of his more inspired selections and original cuts is diminished by obvious choices that, while performed well, have become par for the course on albums such as this.

But that's not to detract from the record as a whole, which is an undeniably polished body of work and a strong showing from the '80s pop icon who remains, four decades later, as in demand as ever and at the top of his game.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

ABBA
WATERLOO

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **April 5 *UMC***
FORMATS: **2LP Black Vinyl, 3x7" Coloured Vinyl Singles Box Set, 3x7" Picture Disc Vinyl Singles, 10" Vinyl Single**

'Waterloo' is the latest album from ABBA to receive the reissue treatment as the iconic LP and title song turns 50.

The track, of course, saw the Swedish four-piece rise to international acclaim when they won the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest in Brighton and launched one of the most successful and enduring pop legacies ever.

Now, the record arrives on 2LP black vinyl, offering high-quality audio half-speed mastered by Miles Showell at Abbey Road, in line with previous reissues from the band.

Also available are the classic singles from the era - *Waterloo*, *Waterloo (Swedish)* and *Honey Honey* - individually on 7" picture discs and as a 7" coloured vinyl box set, plus a 10" vinyl EP featuring *Waterloo* in various iterations, including French and German-language recordings.

No doubt there will be more surprises from ABBA as Eurovision season approaches and the show returns to Sweden, but this series of releases is a strong start.

NO DOUBT
THE SINGLES 1992-2003

★★★☆☆

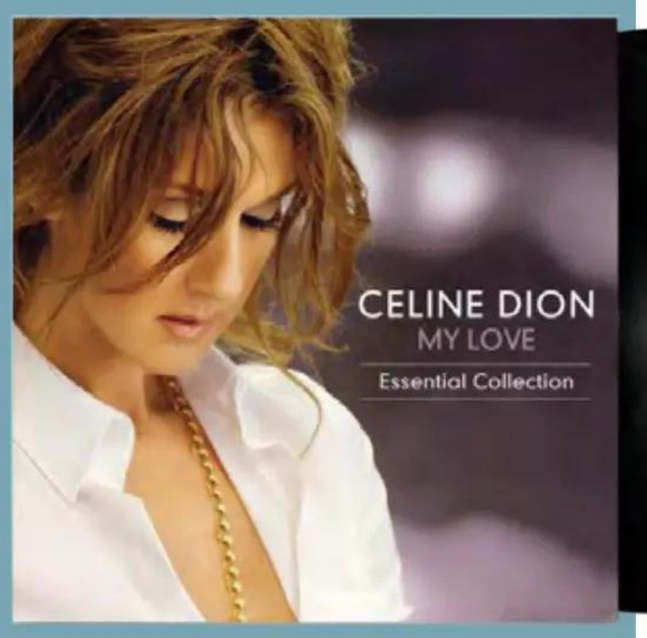
RELEASED: **April 5 *UMC***
FORMATS: **2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Orange Vinyl, 2LP Silver Vinyl**

With No Doubt set to reunite for a set of one-off performances at Coachella this month, the band's classic singles collection is offered up on vinyl for the first time.

Collecting 13 of the band's singles from three studio albums — 'Tragic Kingdom' (1995), 'Return Of Saturn' (2000) and 'Rock Steady' (2001) — and *Trapped In A Box* from their 1992 self-titled debut, the record boasts classics such as *Just A Girl*, *Hella Good*, *Underneath It All* and *Don't Speak*.

Also included is the band's recording of Talk Talk's *It's My Life*, which was new to the set for its original release and gave them another UK Top 20 and US Top 10 hit.

The reissue remains faithful to the original tracklist and hasn't been updated to include cuts from the band's most-recent LP 'Push And Shove' (2012), however the strength of No Doubt's original run and the pressings on offer make it a worthwhile addition to any fan's collection.



CELINE DION
MY LOVE: ESSENTIAL COLLECTION

★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **April 5 *Sony***
FORMATS: **2LP Black Vinyl**

Available on vinyl for the first time, 'My Love' celebrates Celine Dion's biggest hits released between 1990 and 2008.

Opening with the iconic 'Titanic' theme song *My Heart Will Go On*, the album clocks in at 19 songs and features classics such as her rendition of Eric Carmen's *All By Myself*, first English-language single *Where Does My Heart Beat Now* and the epic *Think Twice*.

Alongside collaborations with Barbra Streisand (*Tell Him*) and the Bee Gees (*Immortality*), the album also boasts the Linda Perry-penned title track, *My Love*.

Also packing in several 21st century cuts, including *A New Day Has Come*, *I'm Alive*, *I Drove All Night* and *Taking Chances*, it remains a strong retrospective of Dion's best-loved material and while an update with newer recordings wouldn't go amiss, its nonetheless a long-overdue vinyl release.

MANIC STREET PREACHERS
LIFEBLOOD 20
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **April 12 *Sony***
FORMATS: **CD, 3CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Red Vinyl**

For its 20th anniversary, the seventh studio album from Manic Street Preachers is expanded for a bumper reissue.

Originally released in 2004, 'Lifeblood' boasts 12 tracks including the singles *The Love Of Richard Nixon* and *Empty Souls*, with production from Tony Visconti, Tom Elmhirst and Greg Haver.

Single CD and vinyl editions include the original record, while the 3CD bookset edition features CD 2 and 3, comprising B-sides, demos, outtakes and two brand new remixes of *1985* by Steven Wilson (Porcupine Tree) and Gwenno.

It also includes brand new liner notes by John Harris and previously-unseen photographs by Mitch Ikeda.

It's unfortunate the bonus content is exclusive to CD formats, for what's otherwise a superb reissue.

TINA TURNER
WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT (30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION)
★★★★★
RELEASED: **April 26 *Rhino***
FORMATS: **2CD, 4CD+DVD, 1LP Black Vinyl**

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of Tina Turner's 'What's Love Got To Do With It', the soundtrack for the biographical film of the same name is reissued as an epic expanded box set.

Alongside the original remastered album, CD 2 features a collection of edits, remixes and acapella versions, while CD 3 and 4 features Tina's live show at the Blockbuster Pavilion in 1993, which is also on the DVD with three music videos.

Of the material, the star's solo work is lifted from her classic albums, while hits from the Ike and Tina Turner period, including *A Fool In Love*, were exclusive to the set at the time.

Also featured are five original recordings, including the UK Top 10 smash *I Don't Wanna Fight* and Turner's version of The Trammps' disco classic *Disco Inferno*.

Complete with a poster and 24-page booklet, it follows similar releases for her studio albums and documents the late icon at the height of success.

DEAD OR ALIVE
THE PETE HAMMOND HI-NRG REMIXES
★★★★★
RELEASED: **April 26 *Demon***
FORMATS: **2CD**

Revisiting Dead Or Alive's later recordings, legendary producer, Pete 'Mixmaster' Hammond, reimagines 11 classics in an '80s hi-NRG style.

The group achieved their biggest successes with Stock Aitken Waterman, who produced records such as *You Spin Me Round (Like A Record)*, *Lover Come Back To Me*, *Brand New Lover* and *Something In My House*, but the relationship only lasted two LPs before Pete Burns and co. moved on.

This new project revisits the PWL sound with re-recorded versions of some of those early releases, along with tracks from the two 'Fan The Flame' albums (1990 and 2001), 'Nukleopatra' (1995) and 'Fragile' (2000).

What was never in doubt was that the band's sound would match the style, given their hi-NRG history, but Hammond's mixes are superb, all above the eight-minute mark, and frame many of the tracks in a new light.

Remix projects can be hit or miss, but this one strikes gold every time. Also available on vinyl for RSD.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

BELINDA CARLISLE
REAL
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **April 19 *Edsel***
FORMATS: **1LP Half-Speed Master Black Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc Vinyl**

The fifth solo album from Belinda Carlisle is the latest from her catalogue to be remastered for a new vinyl release.

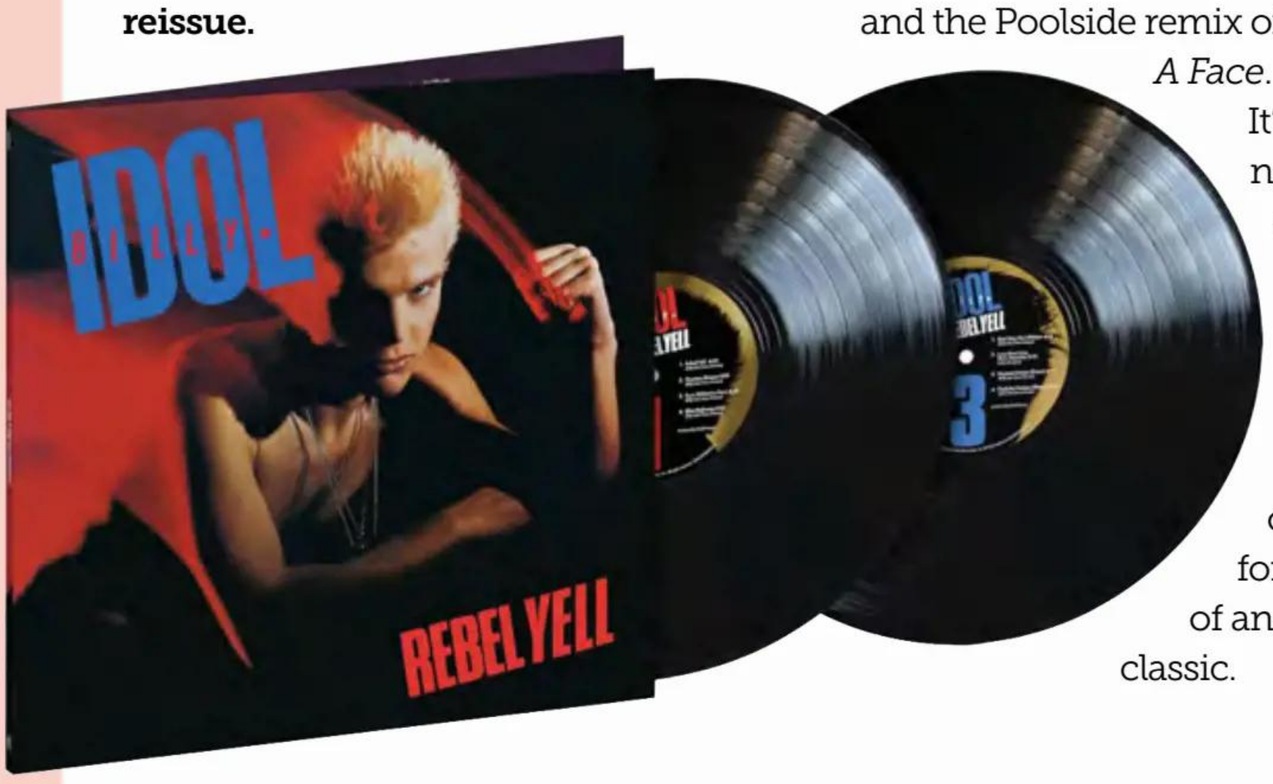
Available on 1LP half-speed mastered by Barry Grint at AIR Mastering from the original stereo tapes, classics like *Big Scary Animal* and *Lay Down Your Arms* have a newfound clarity, in line with previous releases.

The LP is also available as a single picture disc, following on from 'Live Your Life Be Free', which doesn't have the new master but will surely be an essential for completists.

Not Carlisle's most popular solo outing, but written and produced in collaboration with fellow Go-Go Charlotte Caffey, it's a key release in the history of both her solo career and the band's legacy that documents a change in sound that would continue through the decade.

BILLY IDOL
REBEL YELL
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **April 26 *Capitol***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Black Vinyl**

Celebrating four decades since its release, Billy Idol's iconic 'Rebel Yell' album is expanded for its latest reissue.



Originally released in 1983, the LP features such hits as *Eyes Without A Face*, *Flesh For Fantasy* and the title song, and remains one of the rocker's most successful releases.

This deluxe re-release features the original LP along with 13 bonus tracks on the CD and eight on the vinyl, including the previously-unreleased *Best Way Out of Here* and cover of Rose Royce's *Love Don't Live Here Anymore*.

Also featured are original demos and the Poolside remix of *Eyes Without A Face*.

It's a shame not all of the additional content is included on the vinyl edition, but the overall offering makes for a solid reissue of another '80s classic.

BELINDA CARLISLE
DECADES VOLUME 3: CORNUCOPIA
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **May 3 *Demon***
FORMATS: **4CD Media Book**

The third instalment of the 'Decades' series brings together non-album A-sides and B-sides, new studio recordings from the 21st century, alternate mixes and more from Belinda Carlisle's solo repertoire.

Having explored her solo output in its first two volumes, 'Cornucopia' collects several one-off songs for film soundtracks and themed compilation albums and across CDs 1 and 2, including demo recordings and cover versions.

Also included are eight new recordings Belinda has made since 2013 with producer and arranger Gabe Lopez, with whom she's currently working on a new studio album.

Meanwhile, CDs 3 and 4 feature 7" versions of many of her classic hit singles, with a run of 11 live recordings, all originally released as B-sides, closing the set.

Packaged with a 32-page booklet illustrated with the original sleeves of many of the releases, along with annotation, it's a strong addition to the series.

ORBITAL
GREEN ALBUM
★★★★★
RELEASED: **April 19 *London***
FORMATS: **2CD, 4CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Green and Red Vinyl, 4LP Black Vinyl, Red Cassette**

The classic eponymous debut - known as 'The Green Album' - from electronic duo Orbital arrives in an array of reissued formats.

Including the seminal *Belfast* and a live version of the landmark dance track *Chime* that launched their career, the LP sees Phil and Paul Hartnoll explore various rhythms and textures that saw them become trailblazers in the early 1990s scene.

The biggest of the sets is the 4CD edition, which boasts over 40 tracks, including the original album along with B-sides and remixes, plus two full live sets from Orbital, and a 60 page book documenting their story and history.

Elsewhere, 2CD and double vinyl editions feature abridged versions, comprising the original album and a handful of extras, but it's the bumper edition that dives deepest into the group's debut and unearths a treasure trove of material.

Hopefully it's follow-up, the superb 'Brown Album', will get similar treatment too!

GARBAGE
BLEED LIKE ME
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **April 5 *BMG***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Red Vinyl, 1LP Grey Vinyl**

Revisited ahead of its 20th anniversary, the group's final album prior to their hiatus is reissued with a selection of B-sides, remixes and demos.

Featuring the UK Top 10 hit *Why Do You Love Me*, the LP has been remastered for this reissue, with 2CD and 2LP formats boasting a host of additional material, along with a single record including the original tracklist.

The bumper editions also feature the 2007 non-album single *Tell Me Where It Hurts*, along with its two B-sides, *Betcha* and *All That Is Good In This Life*.

Marking the first time 'Bleed Like Me' has been available on vinyl, it's an overdue release for the original record, with the additional material an extra treat.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
BEST OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **April 19 *Sony***
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Blue Vinyl, 2LP Red Vinyl, 2LP Yellow Vinyl**

Celebrating 50 years of hits, Bruce Springsteen's career is condensed to 18 tracks on his latest best-of.

Spanning 1973's 'Greeting from Asbury Park, NJ' to 2020's 'Letter To You', this precis of the rocker's enduring legacy is available on single CD and 2LP vinyl editions, both packed with highlights from his stories past.

Early favourites like *Growin' Up* and *Rosalita (Come Out Tonight)* appear alongside iconic anthems such as *Dancing In The Dark*, *Born To Run* and *Hungry Heart*, as well as recent releases *Hello Sunshine* and *Letter To You*.

Compiled so as to touch on several of Springsteen's most successful eras while also including his most renowned releases, it's a great starting point for new fans of the star, who continues to pack out stadiums worldwide.

For longtime fans there's nothing new, but in including several of his more-recent records this release definitely has its merits.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | **COMPILATIONS**

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! 117

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **April 5 Sony**

FORMATS: **2CD**

The latest instalment of the numbered NOW That's What I Call Music! Brings together 50 of the hottest tracks from the past months.

Ariana Grande's global smash *yes, and?* is among the highlights on the first disc, bringing '90s house back into the charts in 2024, while Kylie Minogue's *Hold On To Now* is another timeless pop moment from the Aussie icon.

Also featured are new releases from Pet Shop Boys (*Loneliness*), Jennifer Lopez (*Can't Get Enough*) and Take That (*This Life*), while smashes from Dua Lipa (*Houdini*), Troye Sivan (*One Of Your Girls*) and RAYE (*Worth It*) showcase the breadth of sounds lighting up the charts today.

There's also Olly Alexander's UK Eurovision entry *Dizzy*, while each disc ends with a throwback - Sophie Ellis-Bextor's *Murder On The Dancefloor* and Natasha Bedingfield's *Unwritten* - both of which have experienced their own renaissance thanks to film appearances.

Another strong set that not only leans into the main charts, but reflects sales, airplay and trending tracks too.

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! 17

★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **April 5 Sony**

FORMATS: **2CD**

Another blast from the NOW past comes in the form of 'NOW That's What I Call Music! 17' on CD.

Erasure's classic anthem *Blue Savannah* opens the set, which spans synth-pop to rock (The Quireboys' *Hey You*), dance (Happy Mondays' *Step On*) and rave-pop, (Technotronic's *This Beat Is Technotronic*).

Capturing the spirit of the early-'90s charts, a handful of classics feature, including Paula Abdul & The Wild Pair's *Opposites Attract* and UB40's *Kingston Town*, which sit neatly alongside groundbreaking releases from Adamski & Seal (*Killer*), Orbital (*Chime*) and Primal Scream (*Loaded*).

Meanwhile, debut hits by Jesus Jones, Candy Flip and Lonnie Gordon continue to showcase the variety of the commercial charts at the time.

Another nostalgic detour into the past that unearths a solid run of classic releases.

NOW 12" 80S: 1982 PART 2

★★★★★

RELEASED: **April 12 Sony**

FORMATS: **4CD**

Packing in more 12" classics from 1982, a second volume from the year features a further 49 extended, full-length or remixed versions.

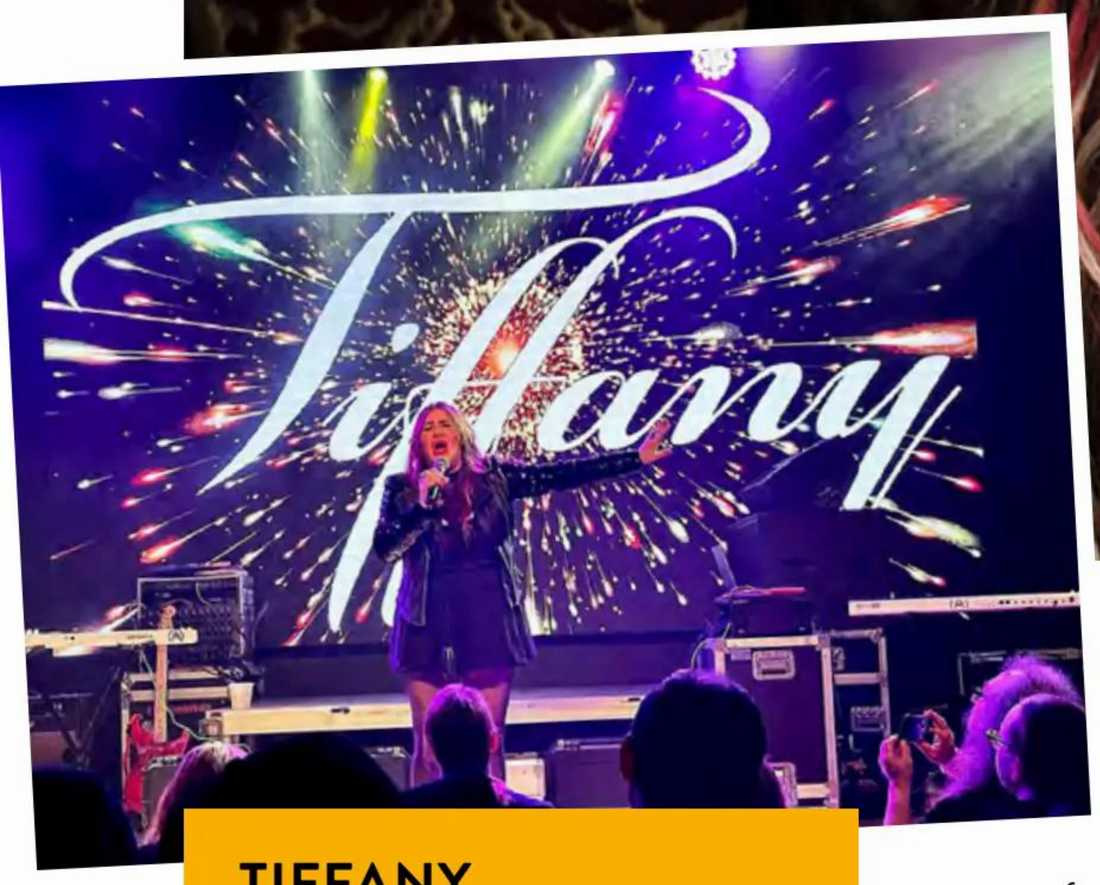
It's the year 12" singles became an essential part of a singles' release and the breadth of tracks, from Wham!'s *Young Guns (Go for It!)* to Duran Duran's *Hungry Like The Wolf*, proves its varied appeal.

From new wave through New Romantic and synth-pop, the set segues between genres, also leaning into ska (Madness' *Our House*), reggae (UB40's *So Here I Am*) and funk (Shakatak's *Night Birds*).

Then there's disco essentials from *Get Down On It* from Kool & The Gang, leading to anthems from Shalamar with *There It Is* and *Love Come Down* from Evelyn 'Champagne' King, which tap into the previous decade's use of the format.

A closing run features second tracks from Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet and Soft Cell, who close out proceedings aptly with *Say Hello Wave Goodbye*, for another excellent celebration of the mighty 12" single.

CAUGHT live



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

TIFFANY
RETROTONIC
SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024
100 CLUB, LONDON
★★★★☆

WORDS FABIO MAGNOCAVALLO

Whether you first fell in love with her as a teen pop sensation, a rock chick with edge, or as a miniature Eiffel Tower on 'The Masked Singer UK', chart-topper Tiffany has had quite the versatile career.

Rising to superstardom aged 15 with her cover of Tommy James and the Shondells' 1960s hit *I Think We're Alone Now*, the US vocalist became the first female solo artist to chart on the US Billboard 200 under 18, and the youngest female artist to hit No. 1 album with her 1987 self-titled debut.

Fast-forward to 2024 and there is still demand for Tiffany to perform to international crowds.

On March 3, she jetted to the UK to sing at London's intimate 100 Club and not only proved that she is a cherished '80s icon, but one with vocals that rival her peers and the stars of today.

Performing a predominantly rock set to an audience of just 350 people, Tiffany entered the stage in a shimmery black outfit and her signature red locks with her live band.

From the off, she meant business; stripped back from any big production, the first quarter of her set featured four songs — *Hey Baby*, *Waste Of Time*, *Shadows* and *Beautiful* — taken from her two most recent studio albums, 'Shadows' and 'Pieces Of Me'. While not everyone in the room was familiar with all of Tiffany's recent material, the moment wasn't lost on the crowd.

The remainder of the show saw her dive straight into a back catalogue of classics. Choosing the perfect song to showcase her powerhouse vocals, Tiffany wowed the crowd with her 1988 classic *All This Time*, which was swiftly followed up by the wholesome *Danny* and heartfelt ballad *Feelings Of Forever*.

Debuting her cover of Robbie Williams' *Angels* for the first time since performing it on ITV's Saturday night show, Tiffany revealed the new release is the first of many to drop in 2024.

Of course, no Tiffany set is complete without her No. 1 smash *I Think We're Alone Now*, with its '80s synths reimagined as a rock production and Tiffany joined by fellow '80s icon Samantha Fox for the second half of the tune, which rounded out her one-hour set with the crowd singing every word.

With a voice that has only gotten better with time, be sure to check out Tiffany when she returns to the UK this summer!

CAUGHT live

RAYE
MY 21ST CENTURY SYMPHONY
FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024
THE O2, LONDON
★★★★★

"What the fuck!" declared RAYE as she ran onstage at The O2 before a sold-out hometown crowd for her biggest headline show to date at the iconic venue.

Just over a year since the release of her record-breaking debut album, 'My 21st Century Blues', the singer-songwriter shifted 20,000 tickets for the show in just 24 hours when they went on sale days after she became the most-nominated artist in a single year in BRITs history, and backed by The Heritage Orchestra and Flames Collective the Friday-night concert was a victory-lap for a breakthrough a decade in the making.

"My wildest dreams are coming true before my eyes. I would be nothing without the people in this room," she declared during one of several candid moments speaking to the crowd, with the stage dressed in white silk drapes - replicated on screens around the arena - and her name lit up in large capitals, conjuring both the grandeur and intimacy of a Las Vegas residency.

But from the moment the south London star bounded onto the stage, barefoot in an elegant black gown, and launched into the soaring *Oscar Winning Tears*, her inimitable combination of soaring, note-perfect vocals and charming candour proved a winning formula that had all eyes fixed on RAYE for a two-hour-long, 20-song set.

Predominantly featuring songs from 'My 21st Century Blues', the set proved something of an emotional cleansing for the vocalist who grouped together her "ugly, shitty songs" - tackling subjects such as addiction (*Mary Jane*) and self-love (*Body Dysmorphia*) - mid-way through the evening.

Concluding the segment with her most emotional track, *Ice Cream Man*, performed from the piano, she delivered a heartfelt introduction and dedicated the song "about something that I was silent about for half my life" to "anyone who needs it".

A swift costume change reset the tone of the evening and the performer reemerged in a metallic silver dress that reflected the lights like a glitterball, with the trap-leaning *Flip A Switch* and house-infused *Black Mascara* leading into a final run that featured RAYE's verse from the Cassö and D-Block Europe collaboration *Prada* and her chart-topping anthem *Escapism*, the night's closing number.

Come lights up, there was no denying RAYE's immense talent and star power, and if the rapturous reaction to her performance was anything to go by there's no stopping her. Truly a once-in-a-generation talent.

PHOTO JEAN YUZHENG ZHANG

CAUGHT live

JAMES ARTHUR
BITTER SWEET LOVE TOUR
SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2024
WEMBLEY ARENA, LONDON

★★★★☆

In the 12 years since he won 'The X Factor UK' back in 2012, James Arthur has been through his share of highs and lows, but emerging on stage at Wembley Arena to a rapturous reaction from the packed-out crowd, he was riding high.

Launching into the 20-song set with the tour's namesake song, the Middlesbrough-born star rose from beneath the stage, sporting a pink sparkly suit, as confetti shot into the air above the crowd and fireworks lit up the stage, catapulting the energy in the venue to the max.

Recent single *Blindside* led into one of the loudest reactions of the night, to his 2018 single *Empty Space*, with the crowd singing along to every word - a response notable throughout the entire show, with fans clearly familiar with his impressive repertoire.

The anthemic *Comeback Kid* and gospel-like *Sermon* all proved popular, as did a cover of Christina Perri's *A Thousand Years*, which gave one of several lights-in-the-air moments. During *Rewrite The Stars* from the reimagined 'Greatest Showman' soundtrack, he invited opening act Neve on stage for Anne-Marie's part, while Dean Lewis joined Arthur to perform *Falling Like The Stars* from the end of the runway.

At various points throughout the evening, the hitmaker engaged with the crowd, at one point taking a BeReal on his own phone and on a fan's too, capturing the moment in real-time, and later inviting a couple up on stage for a proposal that had the entire arena screaming their support.

He also got candid during *Trainwreck*, speaking openly about his mental health struggles and not shying away from the emotional overload of the track.

Closing out the main set, Arthur revisited his 'X Factor' audition and recreated his acoustic rendition of Tulisa's *Young*, before segueing into his powerhouse winning song, a cover of Shontelle's *Impossible*, with 12,500 fans doubling as a gospel choir throughout.

Of course, there was more to come, with the performer returning to the stage for a three-song encore, rattling through recent cuts *New Generation* and *Lasting Lover* before clocking out the show with his massive, chart-topping anthem, *Say You Won't Let Go*.

It was a moment of triumph for the star who was clearly overcome by the moment, at the tail end of the biggest tour of his career to date, with legions of fans hanging on his every word.

PHOTOS JAMES KELLEGHER

RELEASE RADAR

Coming soon...

NEW MUSIC

DUA LIPA
RADICAL OPTIMISM

RELEASED:
May 3 *Warner*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Blue & White Vinyl, 1LP Curacao Blue Vinyl, 1LP Dark Blue Vinyl, 1LP Glow In The Dark Vinyl, 1LP Red Vinyl, 1LP Silver Vinyl, Cassette

The third album from the superstar featuring the hit singles *Houdini* and *Training Season*.

GABRIELLE
A PLACE IN YOUR HEART

RELEASED:
May 10 *BMG*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Transparent Curacao Blue Vinyl

The follow-up to her Top 5 covers collection, the soul superstar returns with her first collection of original material in six years.

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT
ENJOY YOUTH

RELEASED:
May 17 *YSKWN*
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, Assorted Alternate Colour Artwork Vinyl, Assorted Alternate Colour Artwork Cassette**

The fifth studio album from the pop star is a confident and euphoric showing, featuring contributions from Ian Masterson, Richard X and Ultra Naté!

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
STILL KIDS

RELEASED:
May 17 *BMG*
FORMATS:
CD, Deluce CD, 3D CD Box, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc Vinyl

The band's first full-length studio album in 11 years featuring the lead single *Kids*.

SHAZNAY LEWIS
PAGES

RELEASED:
May 17 *1.9.7.5*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP White Vinyl

The first solo album in 20 years from the All Saints legend, featuring the singles *Miracle* and *Kiss Of Life*.

ZAYN
ROOM UNDER THE STAIRS

RELEASED:
May 17 *Mercury*
FORMATS:
CD, 2LP Forest Green Splatter Vinyl, 2LP Marbled Vinyl

The follow-up to his 2021 album 'Nobody Is Listening', preceded by the single *What I Am*.

LENNY KRAVITZ
BLUE ELECTRIC LIGHT

RELEASED:
May 24 *BMG*
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 2LP Blue and Pink Vinyl, 2LP Picture Disc**

Largely self-written and performed, the 12th LP from the superstar continues to showcase his mastery of deep-soul rock 'n roll.

CROWDED HOUSE
GRAVITY STAIRS

RELEASED:
May 31 *BMG*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Blue Vinyl

The eighth album from the New Zealand group featuring the brand new single *Oh Hi*.

BON JOVI
FOREVER

RELEASED:
June 7 *EMI*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Black & Clear Vinyl, 1LP Candy Apple & Clear Vinyl, 1LP Cobalt Blue & Clear Vinyl, 1LP Ocean Waves Vinyl

The rockers return with their 40th anniversary album featuring the epic new single Legendary.

PETER WILSON
TOUCH

RELEASED:
June 7 *Energise*
FORMATS:
2CD, 2LP Coloured Vinyl

Celebrating 30 years in music, Peter's 11th album includes the singles *Imagine That* and *Heard It In A Heartbeat*.

MEGHAN TRAINOR
TIMELESS

RELEASED:
June 14 *Sony*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl

Supported by the lead single *Been Like This*, a collaboration with T-Pain, the LP precedes Meghan's return to touring after seven years!

KATE NASH
9 SAD SYMPHONIES

RELEASED:
June 21
Kill Rock Stars
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP
Translucent Baby Blue Vinyl, 1LP Olive Green & Cornetto Vinyl, 1LP Pink Vinyl

The singer-songwriter's first LP signed to the legendary Kill Rock Stars label, produced and mixed by Grammy-winner Frederik Thaae.

KASABIAN
HAPPENINGS

RELEASED:
July 5 *Columbia*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Picture Disc Vinyl, 1LP Red Vinyl

The eighth album from the lad rockers and their first since 2022's 'The Alchemist's Euphoria'

MARC ALMOND
I'M NOT ANYONE

RELEASED:
July 12 *BMG*
FORMATS:
CD, 1LP Black Vinyl

An 11-song covers collection of gems from the likes of Don McLean, King Crimson, Paul Anka, Colin Blunstone and Mahalia Jackson.

NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS
WILD GOD

RELEASED:
August 30 *PIAS*
FORMATS: **CD, 1LP Black Vinyl, 1LP Clear Vinyl, 1LP Grey Vinyl**

The 18th studio album by the Australian rock band and their first in five years.

LOOKING BACK

KEANE
HOPES AND FEARS (20TH ANNIVERSARY)

RELEASED:
May 10 *UMC*
FORMATS:
3CD, 2LP Live Edition, 1LP Galaxy Vinyl, 2LP Coloured Vinyl, Box Set (3CD + 7" Single)

Anniversary reissue including the newly remastered album, previously unreleased demos, B-sides and rarities, plus brand new sleeve notes from the band and original team.

QUEEN
QUEEN ROCK MONTREAL

RELEASED:
May 10 *Virgin*
FORMATS:
2CD, 3LP Black Vinyl

Recorded in 1981, this landmark concert recording is released following a record-breaking IMAX event.

BUSTED
BUSTED; A PRESENT FOR EVERYONE

RELEASED: **May 10 *Busted Live LLP***
FORMATS: **1LP Red Vinyl; 1LP Blue Vinyl**

The first two albums from the pop-punk group arrive on wax for the first time ever.

DAVID BOWIE
DIAMOND DOGS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

RELEASED:
May 24
Parlophone
FORMATS:
1LP Picture Disc, 1LP Black Vinyl; 'Diamond Dogs' will be issued as a limited edition 50th anniversary picture disc and half-speed mastered vinyl

Arriving on the day of its Golden Jubilee, 'Diamond Dogs' will be issued as a limited edition 50th anniversary picture disc LP.

CHINA CRISIS
CHINA GREATNESS

RELEASED:
May 31 *Last Night From Glasgow*
FORMATS: **2CD, 1LP Red Vinyl, 1LP Yellow Vinyl, 2LP Red Vinyl, 2LP Yellow Vinyl**

A compilation of China Crisis' greatest hits and favourite tracks, arranged by Jack Hymers and recorded and mixed by Grammy-winner Mark Phythian.

LIGHTNING SEEDS
TOMORROW'S HERE TODAY: 35 YEARS OF LIGHTNING SEEDS

RELEASED:
October 4 *Sony*
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP White Vinyl**

The ultimate celebration of three-and-a-half decades of hits including Pure, Lucky You, 3 Lions and more!

For all the latest RETROPOP releases visit
RETROPOPMAGAZINE.COM

TIME TO SHINE

As **Take That** launch their 'This Life' tour across the UK this month, how well do you know the British boy band?

1 When was Take That formed?

2 Which US band did manager Nigel Martin-Smith base the group on?

3 What was Take That's debut single?

4 Which band member is Take That's primary songwriter?

5 Take That's first UK Top 5 hit was a cover of which '70s classic?

6 What was the title of Take That's debut album?

7 How many BRIT Awards have Take That won?

8 The group released which two singles following Robbie Williams' 1995 exit?

9 Who is the only member of Take That to have not released solo material?

10 What was the name of Take That's first album after their reunion in 2005?

11 Which two members of Take That served as judges on 'The X Factor UK'?

12 Take That returned to the top of the charts in 2006 with which two UK No. 1 hits?

13 Which single appeared on the soundtrack of the film 'Stardust'?

14 Prior to rejoining Take That in 2010, Robbie Williams teamed up with Gary Barlow for which single?

15 Take That's five-piece reunion album 'Progress' sold more than half a million copies in its first week. True or false?

16 Where was Take That's final performance as a five-piece?

17 How many UK No. 1 albums have Take That had?

18 What's the name of the chart-topping single that launched Take That as a trio?

19 Who wrote the Take That musical 'The Band'?

20 The group's chart-topping 2023 album 'This Life' beat Lewis Capaldi, Ed Sheeran and The Rolling Stones to which feat?

ANSWERS: **1** 1990; **2** New Kids On The Block; **3** *Do What U Like*; **4** Gary Barlow; **5** *Could It Be Magic*; **6** 'Take That & Party' (1992); **7** Eight; **8** *Never Forget* and *How Deep Is Your Love*; **9** Jason Orange; **10** 'Beautiful World' (2006); **11** Gary Barlow and Robbie Williams; **12** *Patience* and *Shine*; **13** *Rule The World*; **14** *Shame*; **15** True; **16** The 2012 Music Industry Trust Awards; **17** Seven; **18** *These Days*; **19** Tim Firth; **20** The biggest first-week sales for a British Act in 2023

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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